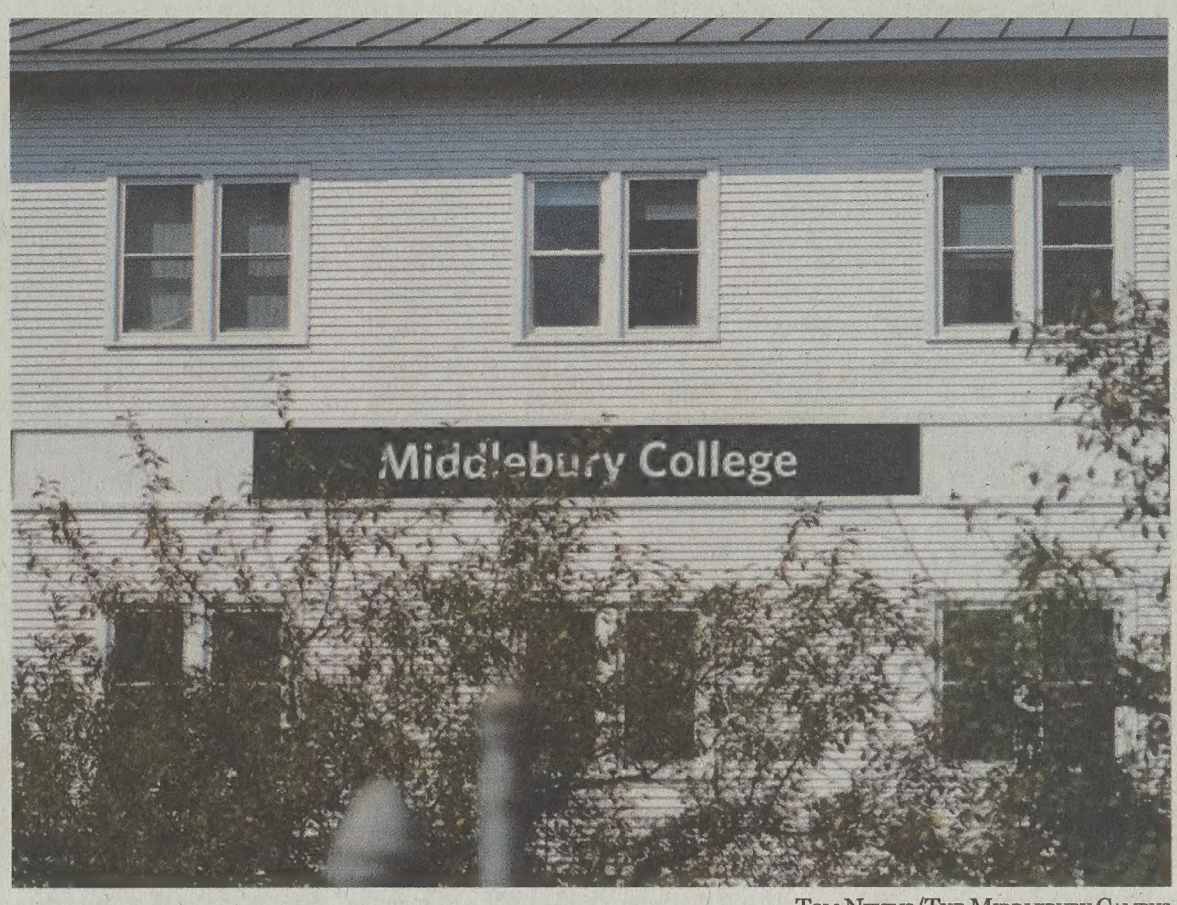
The Middlebury Campus

VOL. CXXI, No. 11 | MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT, JANUARY 19, 2023 | MIDDLEBURYCAMPUS.COM

FOUR MONTHS IN: REACTIONS TO PILOT YEAR OF STAFF COMPENSATION "SKILL MATRIX"

By MAGGIE REYNOLDS
Senior Local Editor



TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Middlebury implemented a new "skill matrix system" this fall to determine compensation for staff.

Middlebury's new staff compensation program — known as the "skill matrix" system — improved compensation for staff at the bottom of the pay scale, while 14% of staff did not receive a raise during the 2022–23 fiscal year.

For many staff, the minimum wage increase to $17 per hour was a long overdue investment in Middlebury's lowest paid workers. However, many of the staff members who did not receive a raise are longtime employees who work in specialized positions.

According to Terry Simpkins, director of discovery and access services, the skill matrix system in general, and particularly its lack of cost-of-living adjustments, has been damaging to overall staff morale.

"Those people [at the bottom] absolutely needed to have their salaries increased — and substantially," Simpkins told The Campus. "[However], I would say that the college could have done both."

Tim Parsons, the college's landscape horticulturist, has a different perspective on the implications of the new system. Coming from a business background and knowing what it is like to run a business, Parsons said he understands the college's limited resources.

"The endowment is not a piggy bank that we can raid," Parsons told The Campus. "People above market or at market didn't see a pay increase, but the money wasn't there. We started with the most important."

Above market refers to the matrix system's pay grades. Each staff position at the college is placed into a salary range, which is determined by looking at market data for a range of comparison schools. From there, an employee is given a salary somewhere within the minimum to maximum of that range, depending on their manager's classification of their skill level as "learning," "growing," "thriving" or "leading."

Staff members whose salaries already fell at the maximum of the pay grade or higher were not eligible for a raise of any sort for this fiscal year. According to Simpkins, this was particularly frustrating because inflation was 16% over the past three years, while his salary has only increased 1.9% over that same time.

Caitlin Goss, vice president for human resources and chief people officer, said the college is aware that there is still work to be done in the field of staff wages, though this first year was a large step.

"I know that we still have work to do," Goss told The Campus. "I have tried to be really clear about that — while we made great strides in year one, we still have work to do."

Goss explained that Middlebury is committed to updating the market each year, which means that employees frustrated with the program will have the possibility for improvement next year. A staff member could see a raise if the market shifts, if their placement on the skill matrix changes or if the scope of their role changes.

Brenda Ellis, senior research and instruction librarian, said she believes the college continues to "cry poor to staff," but it has no justification for some staff receiving a 0% raise when the endowment was growing right before Covid-19 hit, and the college lost little during the pandemic.

"They so far have not offered a dime to staff because they said they cannot afford it," Ellis told The Campus.

According to Goss, however, Middlebury is investing more in its faculty and staff than many of its liberal arts college peers. In a November email to all staff members, Goss shared a graphic comparing Middlebury's compensation increases for the 2023 fiscal year to other NESCAC institutions. The data indicates that the average increase in money invested in staff was 4.29% among peer institutions, while Middlebury invested 7% more in staff.

Staff members critical of the graphic said, however, that Middlebury was further behind its peer schools to begin with, so it had to increase investment more to catch up.

Another aspect of the compensation system which some staff members take issue with is the market of schools to which Middlebury was compared in order to create the pay grades. This group of schools, which was determined based on factors such as operating expenses, student enrollment, geography and enrollment, includes Roger Williams and Suffolk University. These criteria led to comparison with schools that have higher enrollment and fewer resources than Middlebury, which means they could not pay their staff as well, thus bringing down the salaries on the pay grade, Ellis said.

"It seems odd that what Roger Williams pays their staff is going to determine my salary," Simpkins added.

Furthermore, some staff in specialized positions, such as Simpkins and Ellis, said they believe a more appropriate comparison market for their jobs would be other NESCAC schools, or nearby Dartmouth College, for example. Meanwhile, hiring for positions in facilities and dining tends to draw from the local Addison County market.

Parsons said that as the largest employer in Addison County, the college must walk a fine line between leading the wage market and driving up average wages, thus hurting small businesses.

In response to criticisms of the system's market of comparison schools, Goss said the college plans to undergo an analysis re-evaluating the group of market schools this coming year.

"I hear people loud and clear," she said. "We are trying to make sure that the market is reflective of where we are recruiting from, where people get other job opportunities from."

While reactions to the new system have been mixed among staff members in different positions, Parsons said he has already seen its positive effects on the lowest paid employees. In his own department, a full-time landscaper position was open for multiple years with essentially no applicants; once the minimum pay rate was raised, the department received a number of applications for the job.

"I have friends [at Middlebury] who now aren't in food lines," Parsons said. While the minimum wage increase has directly impacted some staff members' quality of life, Parsons added that it does not make up for the income gap from years of lower wages.

Goss reiterated that changes to staff compensation are ongoing, and the college will continue to adjust the system each year.

"Faculty and staff compensation continue to be a top priority for our leadership and the institution more broadly," Goss said.

Panel discusses implications of Supreme Court decision on affirmative action for college community

By MANDY BERGHELA
Contributing Writer

The Student Government Association's (SGA) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI) along with the Middlebury Community Council and JusTalks hosted a community dialogue to discuss the question, "What would ending affirmative action mean for Middlebury?"

Before the discussion began, commentary and background information on affirmative action was provided by Middlebury scholars, educators and community leaders including Political Science Professor Bert Johnson, Education Studies Professor Tara Affolter, Vice President of Equity and Inclusion Khuram Hussain, Dean of Admissions Nicole Curvin and Middlebury General Counsel Hannah Ross.

The speakers explained that affirmative action as defined by the Supreme Court is a race-conscious policy aimed at addressing barriers in the entry to higher education for underrepresented students by considering race as a factor in admissions. Currently, there are nine states that have banned affirmative action.

"The Court has ruled in at least three major cases and several minor ones over the course of 50 years that race may be used as one factor as part of a holistic review with the goal of achieving a diverse student body," Johnson said. "There are two cases right now that are contesting that conclusion made in University of California Regents v. Bakke back in 1978, one against the University of North Carolina (UNC) and one against Harvard. Challengers argue that race as one factor unjustly disadvantages other racial groups, in particular, the Harvard case cites that Asian Americans suffer as a result of affirmative action programs designed to benefit Black and Hispanic students."

Continued on Page 2

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sujata Moorti, vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty, to step down

By LILY JONES
News Editor

On Jan. 11, the Office of the President informed the student body that Sujata Moorti, vice president for academic affairs (VPAA) and dean of faculty will be stepping down from these positions this month. The email from President Laurie Patton cited "urgent personal reasons" as the reason for the change. To fill the position, there will be an accelerated internal search for a new VPAA led by the Faculty Council, Patton wrote. In the meantime, Jim Ralph, dean for faculty development and research and professor of American history and culture, will serve as an interim VPAA and Dean of Faculty. When the new VPAA is hired, Ralph will continue serving as Dean of Faculty through the 2023–24 school year.

Moorti, who is also a professor in the Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies Department, has served as VPAA and dean of faculty since July 2019. Patton expressed her appreciation for Moorti's work in her campus-wide email.

"She and her team helped faculty successfully launch a curriculum in each of the pandemic years, and created resources and support structures for faculty to mount their courses in extremely difficult circumstances," Patton wrote.

Patton also cited Moorti's work in developing project-based learning strategies in her collaborations with the Axinn Center for Humanities Public Humanities Labs, the Center for Teaching, Learning and Research (CTLR), the Middlebury College Museum of Art and the Center for Community Engagement (CCE). Patton also commended Moorti's work in developing Midd.data, the Black Studies program and the Afghan scholars program.

COURTESY PHOTO
In addition to her roles in the college administration, Sujata Moorti is a professor in the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies Department.

NEWS

First-year scholars welcomed to the academic community at the First-Year Symposium
By DANIZA TAZABEKOVA
More than 230 first-year students presented at the First-Year Symposium in Axinn...
▶ PAGE 2

LOCAL

Vermont plans to close all walk-in Covid-19 vaccination clinics by end of January
By AMANDA MANOOGIAN

PhotoPlace Gallery's portraits exhibit explores "The essence of the self"
By ASA STONE
▶ PAGE 3

OPINIONS

As tuition rises, we need to rethink affordability
By EDITORIAL BOARD

Afghanistan, an "elephant in the room"
By SAJIA YAQOUBY
▶ PAGE 5

ARTS & CULTURE

Reel Critic: "The Fabelmans"
By JACK TORPEY

From the Archives: Baking from a 19th-century recipe book
By TIFFANY LI
▶ PAGE 8

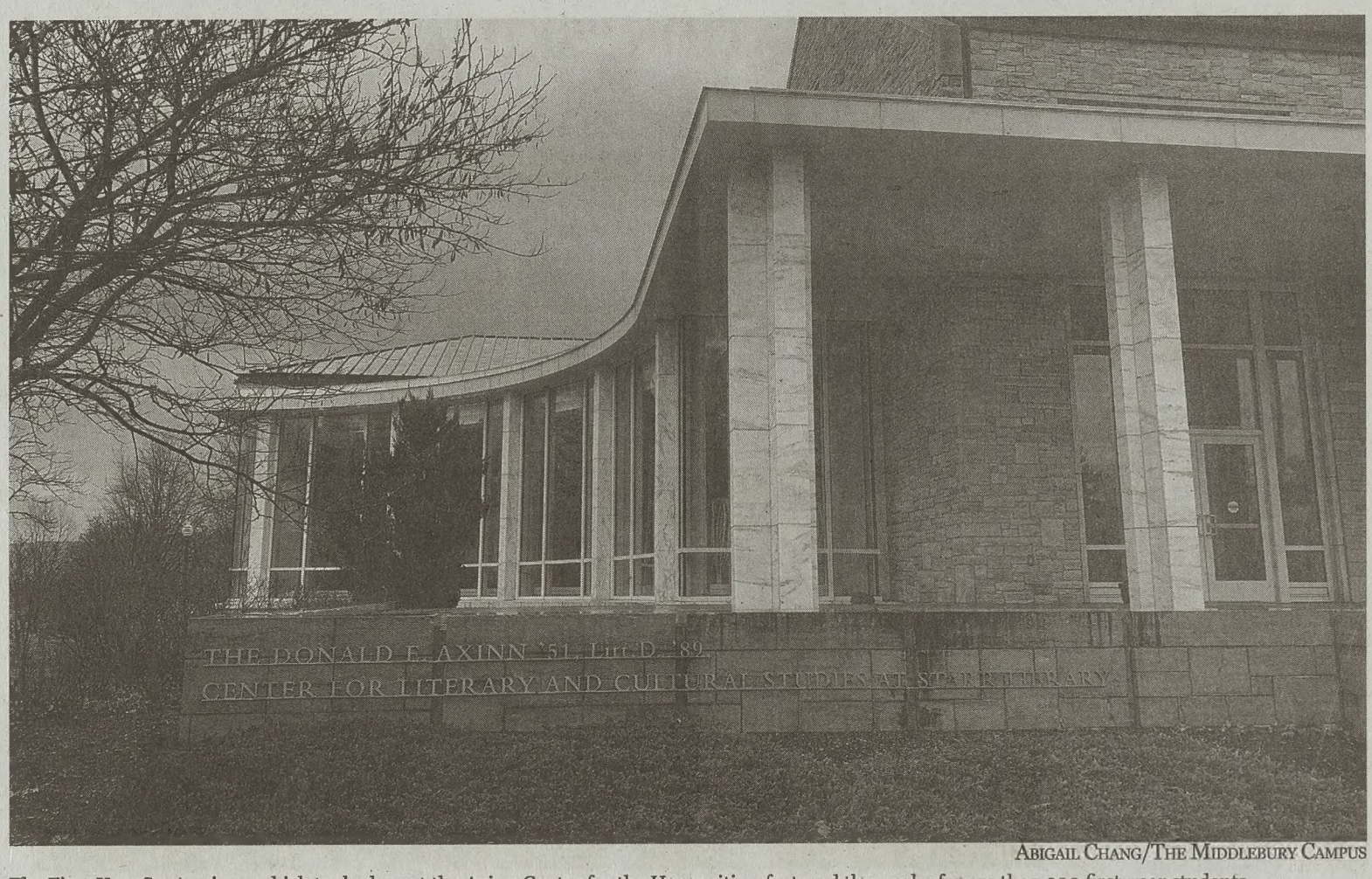
SPORTS

Spectators Guide: How to keep up with the Panthers during J-Term
By OWEN PARK

News in Brief: Erin Nicholas '22 honored as finalist for NCAA Woman of the Year
By JACK McGUIRE
▶ PAGE 11

First-year scholars welcomed to the academic community at the First-Year Symposium

By DANIZA TAZABEKOVA
Contributing Writer



ABIGAIL CHANG/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
The First-Year Symposium, which took place at the Axinn Center for the Humanities, featured the work of more than 230 first-year students.

More than 230 first-year students presented at the First-Year Symposium in Axinn on Dec. 9, 2022. From 3 to 8 p.m., students, faculty and community members watched presentations from roughly half of the fall semester first-year seminars.

The symposium was organized by Professor Dana Yeaton, faculty director of OratoryNow, and Professor Amy Morsman, director of the First Year Seminar Program, to provide first-year students with a platform to meet each other as fellow thinkers, learners and scholars.

Smaller versions of the symposium were organized in previous years, according to Yeaton, but this year's symposium was the largest. In 2020, Yeaton organized a virtual symposium with over 100 participating students. That was the first time all the first-year faculty were approached about participating in the event.

The 2021 in-person symposium was canceled less than three days before it was scheduled to occur due to Covid-19, but Yeaton characterized it as a blessing in disguise.

"That did us a favor because we were able to get a dry run of organizing the event. Even though it didn't happen, we were able to figure out the logistics of hosting a large event like this," Yeaton said.

The symposium was a way to welcome first-years to the academic community, not just as students but as scholars in their own right, and celebrate the end of their first semesters at Middlebury.

"When someone comes to college, it would be great if they were invited to step up in front of the community and talk about something they learned at the end of the semester. We have this with the Spencer Prize competition, but we wanted this to be something different. We wanted this to be tied to something that came right out of class," Yeaton said.

The Spencer Prize Speech Competition allows first-year students to compete and win prizes by delivering compelling speeches. The First-Year Symposium is different because students can volunteer to present, individually or through a seminar, with the freedom to choose their topics.

> "One of the learning goals is the writing-intensive element. It's not that you're writing all the time, it's that you're developing an awareness of writing every week."

Professor Yeaton and Professor Morsman recruited seminar classes for the event by presenting it as a challenge for first-year seminar professors in the fall. Professor Morsman's own seminar, Civil War and Civil Rights, performed sketches and delivered presentations related to Civil War issues.

"Scholars are curious, find answers to difficult questions and then convey them in a meaningful way. Students who haven't even been here for a full semester have the opportunity to present themselves as scholars," Morsman said.

The symposium promoted the learning goals of the first-year seminar, according to Morsman.

"One of the learning goals is the writing-intensive element. It's not that you're writing all the time, it's that you're developing an awareness of writing every week. Students can learn to write and speak with clarity while also educating their peers on a complex historical topic that has modern repercussions," Morsman said. "An event that creates a flow between working on writing and then turning that writing into effective oral presentation is huge for first-year seminars, so this was a great way to capture the end of the semester."

Yeaton believes exposure to large-scale public speaking is crucial for first years, especially as they move on to be community leaders and globally-minded citizens.

> "I saw a lot of smiles on people's faces. I loved seeing the sense of accomplishment and camaraderie."

"As seniors, you realize that your effectiveness in the world is dependent on your ability to speak, but you're three years too late. The symposium is significant because it teaches students early on that public speaking is not just a commercial skill — it's a pretty important intellectual capacity and a way of learning," Yeaton said.

Professor Yeaton hopes the First-Year Symposium will become a regular tradition, as it is in other colleges and universities.

"Now you can conceive of there being a presentation culture at Middlebury, that we don't just sit in our rooms and read. We have a sense of public scholarship here," Yeaton said.

"I was not only proud of my students, but I was happy for them. It seemed like it was an event they enjoyed even if they were nervous. They overcame their anxiety and shared their knowledge with a body of people who don't know the topic," Morsman said. "I saw a lot of smiles on people's faces. I loved seeing the sense of accomplishment and camaraderie. This is a huge confidence boost for students as they go into their second semester."

For the next symposium, they hope to get more first-year professors involved from the start.

"If we could do it again, it would be wonderful if we had even more seminars. We had roughly half of the seminars participate in the symposium, but more participation would be great even if it is a logistical challenge," Morsman said.

Panel discusses implications of Supreme Court decision on affirmative action for college community

Continued from Page 1

Middlebury has become involved in these two pending cases. Middlebury College, along with 32 other liberal arts colleges, signed an amicus curiae brief in support of both Harvard and UNC in the legality of race as one of many factors. In an announcement back in August 2022, representatives of Middlebury wrote, "The brief aligns with Middlebury's deep commitment to creating a diverse, welcoming community with full and equitable participation for all individuals and groups. Removing the ability to consider race as one factor among many in the admissions process threatens this effort."

The Supreme Court is not set to make a decision until June 2023, which has allowed time for discussion of its possible effects to arise.

"There is a majority of six justices that are described as fairly conservative, and in the October hearings, they voiced some skepticism about the necessity of race-conscious admissions," Ross said. "Because of this, as a college we are all working very hard to prepare for the different outcomes that might result from this case and will continue sharing information as it develops."

The discussion also provided commentary on the benefits of affirmative action to Middlebury students themselves. Affolter quoted evidence from an amicus brief submitted by the American Educational Research Association to the Supreme Court in support of affirmative action at Harvard University.

"Students with greater exposure to racial diversity are likely to score higher academically, have higher self confidence, greater social agency and overall greater dispositions to critical thinking," Affolter said. "Student body diversity promotes cross racial understanding and reduces prejudice, overall leading to more positive interethnic attitudes by the end of college."

Many student participants agreed with her perspective and added their own thoughts about how affirmative action would benefit their education.

"Exposure to greater campus diversity will allow for higher civic engagement after graduating college, leading to an effective democracy in which leaders who believe in diversity and liberal thinking are chosen," said one student who raised their hand to contribute.

Curvin also spoke from her perspective as the leader of the team who is in charge of implementing all of these components that influence the admission of future Middlebury students.

"Middlebury has been bringing in more diverse classes over the past several years, and we are committed to move in that direction, understanding that there will be steps forwards and steps backwards along the way," Curvin said.

After commentary from the guest speakers, students and faculty were split into groups to have their own discussions about the same affirmative action question, with prompts created by the JusTalks team. Discussion topics included overall opinions about the commentary provided by the speakers, what they believed Middlebury's responsibility is in addressing issues of diversity following the Supreme Court decision, and overall what the college should do next as a community.

Following these smaller discussions, participants from each group were invited to discuss what was brought up in their own groups with the rest of the room.

One student shared how affirmative action helps gets students of color in the door at colleges and universities, but what institutions such as Middlebury need to work on is making sure these students now have the same opportunities and resources as white students — a statement that was followed by a round of applause afterwards.

The energy of the conversation in the room leaned more towards this perspective in support of affirmative action, but speakers were also taking into consideration how it impacts all students.

"What we wanted to accomplish out of this event was to bring the community together to be better informed and engaged at this critical moment where higher education policies may shift dramatically around issues we care deeply about." Hussain said.

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Attendees gathered in Crossroads Cafe to hear from panelists, which included Middlebury faculty and administrators.

Leahy, Welch, Sanders-Sponsored federal funding bill grants money to Vermont community projects

By ERIC BURCHILL
Digital Director

Senator Bernie Sanders announced in late December that he has secured over $42 million in federal funding to benefit 51 Vermont community projects, a number of which are located in Addison County.

This money was part of the $1.7 trillion omnibus bill that passed the Senate on Dec. 22. The bill was announced by then-Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy, the Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman on Monday, Dec. 19.

"Our bipartisan, bicameral, omnibus appropriations bill directly invests in providing relief from the burden of inflation on the American people" Senator Leahy wrote in a statement on behalf of the Appropriations Committee.

Among the funds approved by the Senate are $44.9 billion in emergency aid to Ukraine, $40.6 billion in assistance for communities all over the U.S. recovering from natural disasters, a record $700 million to combat violence against women, and more. The bill was the final piece of legislation passed by Leahy, whose last day as a senator was Jan. 3.

Leahy, alongside his successor Peter Welch and fellow Senator Bernie Sanders, helped to direct much of these funds to local Vermont communities. $2.5 million will go toward increasing affordable homeownership opportunities for low- and middle-income Vermont residents and $4.22 million will go toward increasing Vermonters' access to dental care.

"I am proud that I have been able to give Vermont a center seat at the table as this bill was written and fund programs that will make a real difference in the lives of Vermonters," Leahy said of the funds.

Here in Addison County, various organizations received money with specific goals and projects toward which the funds will be used.

The Patricia Hannaford Career Center of Middlebury is receiving $550,000 to help Addison County students find jobs through advanced manufacturing training and internships. Another $425,000 will go to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Ferrisburgh to help digitize and publish primary sources and archives related to the lake's role in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. Middlebury's Yellow House Community — a residential care facility that provides housing, enrichment and community engagement for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the state of Vermont is receiving $250,000. The Brandon Police Department is receiving $18,000 for the purchase of a new electric motorcycle. Finally, $7,000 will go to building a solar array to offset the carbon footprint and reducing energy costs of the Brandon Senior Citizens Center.

The Rokeby Museum in Ferrisburgh, which received a $55,000 grant, will use the money to begin updating an exhibit that examines the history of the Underground Railroad in Vermont. The Rokeby Museum is a historic national landmark and one of the best-documented Underground Railroad sites in the country.

According to Lindsay Varner, the executive director of the Rokeby, the museum plans to use the money to further develop an exhibit dedicated to the Robinson family of Vermont. The Robinson family lived on the Rokeby site from the late eighteenth century all the way through the early 1960s. The second generation of Robinson descendants were abolitionists in the anti-slavery movement who opened their home as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

The Rokeby Museum currently has an exhibit showcasing the history of the Robinson family but will use the federal funding to update the exhibit. The museum is closed for the season, but will reopen in May. The current Robinson family exhibit will continue to be available for viewing until October, when they will begin work on the updated version.

Varner said she is "ecstatic" about the museum receiving this funding award.

"The central focus here at the museum is education: educating children, tourists, and lifelong learners," Varner told The Campus. Varner added that she is very grateful the museum's mission aligned with Senator Sanders' to receive this funding.

Vermont plans to close all walk-in Covid-19 vaccination clinics by end of January

By AMANDA MANOOGIAN
Staff Writer

The state plans to close all walk-in Covid-19 vaccination clinics by Jan. 31, according to the Vermont Department of Health. In preparation for this closure, clinics statewide have begun transitioning to new hours. These new operating hours, which started in December, include more availability on weekends and evenings, with the intention of encouraging more Vermonters to seek vaccination around the holidays.

According to data from the Vermont Immunization Registry, the state has administered between 500,000 and 1 million vaccine doses since the start of the pandemic, including to both Vermont and out-of-state residents.

The state vaccine dashboard also shows that nearly 500,000 Vermonters have completed their primary vaccination series, with just under 200,000 of those receiving the newest bivalent booster. This means that 79% of Vermont residents have completed the primary series, while just 32% of Vermonters over the age of five have received the bivalent booster.

In Addison County, the vaccination rates are slightly higher than those statewide, with 83% of the county receiving the primary series and 41% receiving the bivalent booster. Vermont residents who are 75 or older had the highest rates of bivalent booster shots, with age and vaccination rates increasing concurrently.

The Vermont Department of Health stated that the reason for closing state-run walk-in clinics is due to the success of the clinics in meeting the high demand for Covid-19 vaccines and because of the widespread availability of vaccines.

"Vaccines are now widely available at doctors' offices, pharmacies and other locations," the department wrote in a tweet on Jan. 4.

The vaccine will also remain available at some community-run clinics, such as those put on by the Vermont Health Equity Initiative. The Health Equity Initiative clinics will continue to offer free bivalent boosters and flu vaccinations to BIPOC Vermont residents and all members of their households following the closure of state-run clinics. However, these clinics are far less ubiquitous than the state-run walk-in clinics.

In addition, demand for Covid-19 vaccinations has decreased significantly in recent weeks, further motivating the state to shut down its walk-in clinics. In an early January interview with VTDigger, Monica Ogelby, immunization program chief for the health department, said that the state administered just 20,000 doses in December, despite increasing weekend and evening availability in the clinics. This drastically decreased demand added to the state's decision to discontinue its walk-in clinics.

Respiratory illnesses such as Covid-19 and the flu generally follow a seasonal pattern, with the highest rates of infection occurring during the winter months. Accordingly, closure of the walk-in clinics coincides with the end of the ideal window to be vaccinated. Receiving a vaccination before the end of January is the optimal way to protect yourself and others, Ogelby told VTDigger.

Vermont has kept its walk-in clinics open comparatively longer than a number of other states. States such as Texas and Illinois permanently closed analogous clinics at the beginning of 2022, opting not to bring them back to distribute the bivalent booster.

A full list of sites offering the bivalent vaccine both in Addison County and statewide is available on the state's Immunizations and Infectious Disease webpage.

VBS
A haven of culture and calm in the center of downtown Middlebury.
J-Term is here, BUT...
The conditions suck. Or maybe your'e not really into skiing anyway?
How 'bout you tuck into a good book instead?
Schuss on down and see what we've got!
The Vermont Book Shop
Since 1949
38 main street • www.vermontbookshop.com

PhotoPlace Gallery's portraits exhibit explores "The essence of the self"

By ASA STONE
Contributing Writer

"Portraits: Self and Others" is a new photography exhibit that opened at the end of December at the PhotoPlace Gallery in downtown Middlebury. Tucked away on Park Street, the gallery offers a new perspective on photography, accepting submissions for its monthly exhibits from photographers all over the world.

The finalists are selected by a rotating juror to be displayed at the in-person gallery in Middlebury. January's photographic topic is portraits of one's self and others, with selections chosen by photographer Aline Smithson of Los Angeles, Calif.

Smithson was given the job of sorting through thousands of photographs to choose 35 to hang at the physical gallery in Middlebury, as well as an additional 40 photos to be displayed in an "Online Gallery" on the PhotoPlace website.

In her Juror's Statement, Smithson described what a "daunting task" it was to select the photos for display. "I literally looked at thousands of photographs over and over and selected about three times the amount of work that would fit into the gallery and the online exhibition," Smithson wrote. "That's when the work gets really really hard."

Smithson also discussed what she sees as the difference between a portrait and a photograph of a person. One of the key indicators of a finalist for the exhibit was if the image spoke to her, she wrote.

"Jurying a show is a totally subjective process. An image that might not resonate with me, might win first prize in another exhibition," she added.

That is what makes PhotoPlace Gallery unique; a different internationally recognized juror every month means that each exhibit topic offers a new photographic perspective and therefore a fresh viewing experience.

Each photograph in the exhibit portrays a different artist's take on what a portrait means. Most photos contain a person and a body, but not all contain a face. The subjects range from young to old, posed to candid, and stern to smiling.

Each photographer has a different story to tell and a different method to achieve their goal, but they align under a common purpose: demonstrating the essence of themselves or others through a single photograph. "Portraits don't have to be of people — they can celebrate an object or even an emotion," Smithson wrote. This perspective is shared through her chosen photographs, along with selections of a Juror's Award, Director's Award and Honorable Mentions.

The Juror's Award is a portrait by New York City-based photographer Ricky Day, entitled "All Black Kings Go To Heaven: Minkah and Scott." In the image, two men lay with arms entangled on top of an American flag looking directly at the camera. Through the use of light and shadows, Day captures an intimate yet intense moment between the subjects.

The Director's Award, "Mom (at the door of the sun room)," portrays a woman holding a cat by a window, with a look of longing on her face. Artist James Gibson adds complexity to the piece through his use of black and white and the contrast between light and darkness to convey the subject's morose mood.

Each month, and sometimes twice a month, a new exhibit is displayed in the PhotoPlace Gallery. To keep up this pace, many exhibits are curated simultaneously. Selections for the next exhibit, Portals: Windows, Mirrors and Doors, were announced recently, while the Botanical and Parenthood exhibits are still accepting submissions.

The first step in the process is choosing a topic and a juror. According to gallery manager Zach, PhotoPlace director and owner James Barker selects the themes, some of which appear annually. Jurors are then chosen based on their connection to the selected topic.

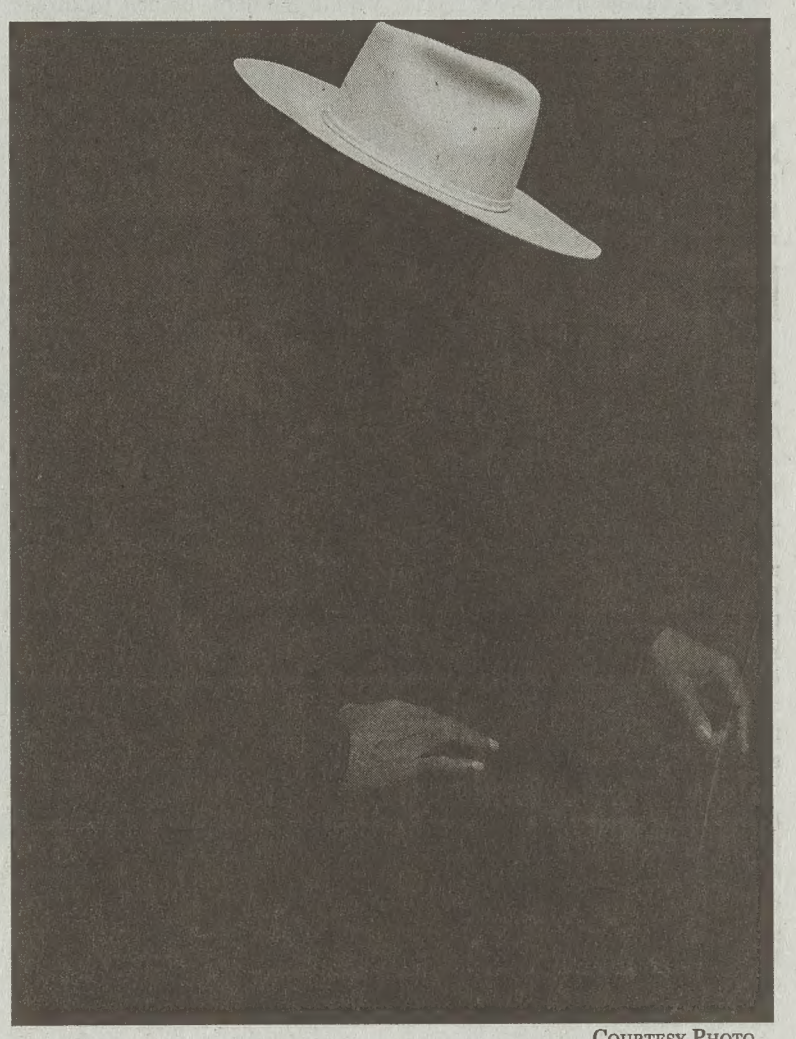
"The next exhibit we're going to be announcing is Botanical, so we have someone who is known for that kind of photography," Hoffman told The Campus. "We had a botanist actually curate one and they did a little bit more scientific side of what we got submitted, which is nice to get that different perspective."

One of Hoffman's responsibilities is hanging and taking down the photographs themselves. Hoffman said he believes Bill Bayer's portrait, "Ibou Lost into His Art" is a unique piece in the gallery and Fran Ages' "Carol 2022" and Magdalena Barry's "John Barry Graham" are particularly well composed. These are some of the first photographs visible inside the gallery.

The gallery also partners next-door neighbor Otter Creek Custom Framing to provide free matting and framing to photographers whose images are displayed in the gallery.

Hoffman said that the simple framing is strategic — "It lets you look at the pictures and not have to be distracted." The light and homey feel inside the gallery also emphasizes the photography displayed.

Portraits: Self and Others will remain in the gallery until Jan. 20 and Portals: Windows, Mirrors and Doors, selected by juror Laura Moya, will be displayed from Jan. 27 through mid-February.



COURTESY PHOTO
Portrait "Douglas' Swag" by New York City-based photographer Ricky Day.

Middlebury businesses temporarily shorten hours for winter months

By MADELEINE KAPTEIN
Copy Editor

After a busy holiday season, businesses in the town of Middlebury are temporarily closing or reducing their hours for the winter. Middlebury Mountaineer, The Schmetterling Wine Shop, The Vermont Book Shop, Buy Again Alley and Middleton have all shortened their hours. The Stone Mill public market has fully closed for a three week period. Local businesses limiting hours in winter has become common practice in recent years due to an annual need to reset and a smaller number of customers coming in during the colder months.

Steve Atocha, owner of outdoor gear and clothing store Middlebury Mountaineer, has opted to close on Mondays since Jan. 1, but said the store will return to regular hours at some point in the spring. He looks forward to taking an extra day to pay bills and get things organized in the store while business is slow.

"You walk around downtown Middlebury on a Monday and you know it's fairly quiet," Atocha said. "It's also more of a staffing issue for us, just because we do run a small skeleton business. When we have some other college students that come back, later this spring or early this summer, we'll probably be open seven days a week."

The Schmetterling Wine Shop has shortened their hours from open five days a week to only Friday to Sunday, 11 a.m to 6 p.m. Owner Danielle Pattavina attributes their choice to a decrease in customers after the holidays and widespread participation in "Dry January," a common New Year's resolution to abstain from alcohol for the first month of the year.

"There are a lot of wine shops in Burlington that have completely closed their doors in January, but we decided to just lessen our hours over the course of the month to stay open, just not our full-fledged five days a week," Pattavnia said. For now, Schmetterling has added an online feature for customers to shop at any time and pick up orders during open hours, and they also may shop by appointment. They will expand their hours as the days get longer in late winter and early spring.

The Vermont Bookshop will close all day on Sundays and an hour early on Monday through Saturday, with hours from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Store owner Becky Dayton said this change is typical for the shop in the winter, and she thinks staying open later is unnecessary when it gets dark earlier in the day and foot traffic is reduced. Additionally, she aims to accommodate her staff members with children and families to attend to in the evenings.

Buy Again Alley, a thrift store on Main Street, is open daily at 11 a.m., an hour later than their usual 10 a.m. opening time. Store manager Janette Gykeri said staffing has not been an issue for them, but there are not many people looking to shop earlier in the morning. She plans to see what her peer businesses do in the spring and adjust the shop's hours accordingly.

The Stone Mill public market's temporary closure will last from Jan. 2 to Jan. 24. Their Instagram page announced they are taking the time to freshen up their space and take a break before beginning the new year.

The market also closed in January 2022 in a similar effort to reset.

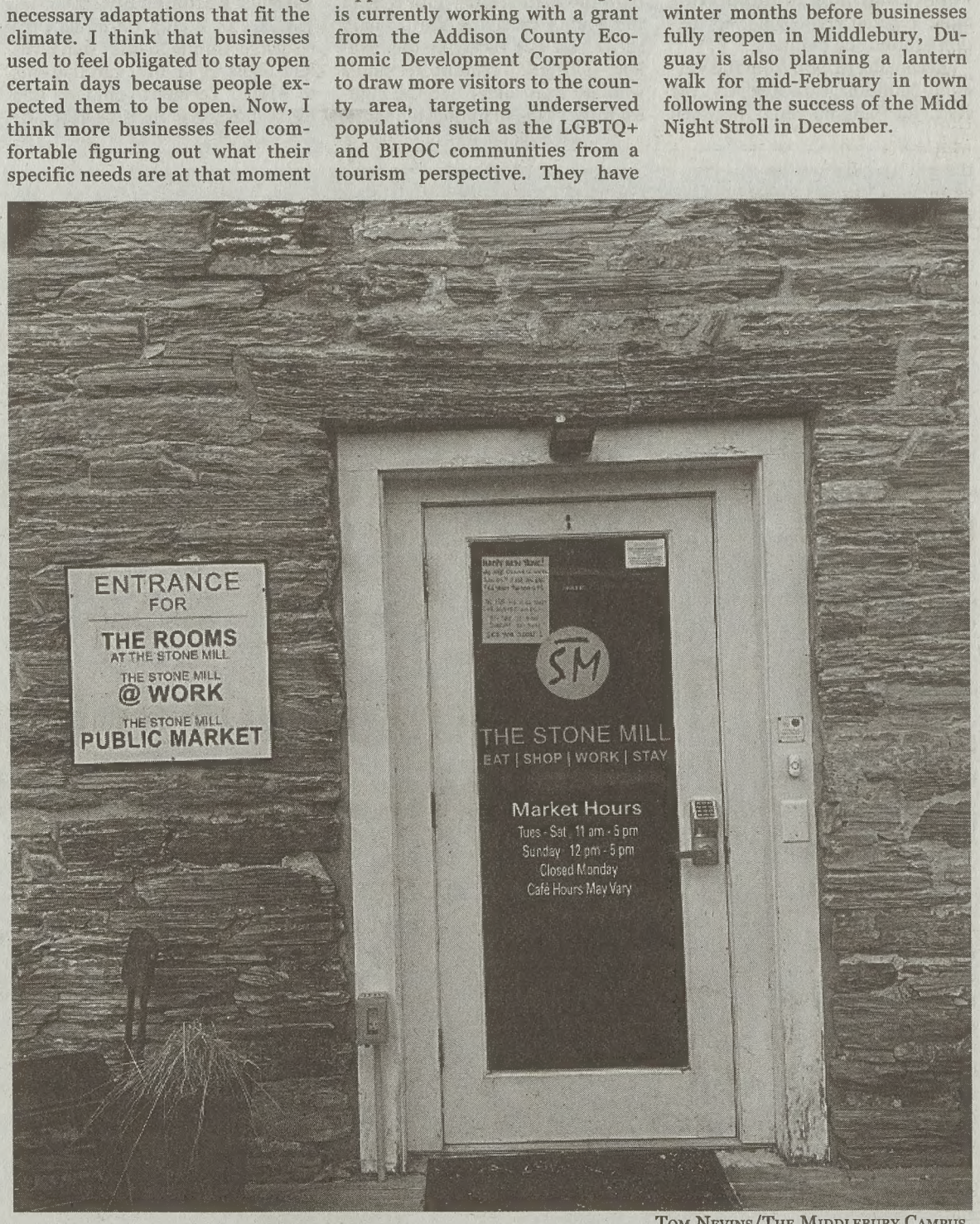
"Closing for a few weeks in January positioned us for a stronger year across all our businesses. Investing time and effort over a three-week period to do this work, enables us to see a return on that investment through the year," Community Barn Ventures – an advisory business on the second floor of The Stone Mill – partner Stacey Rainey wrote in an email to The Campus.

Karen Duguay from the Better Middlebury Partnership (BMP), a civic organization dedicated to supporting local businesses in Middlebury, said that businesses like the Stone Mill public market that opened right before the Covid-19 pandemic are still trying to figure out what is normal for them.

"One positive thing that has come out of the pandemic is that businesses have gotten more nimble and confident with making necessary adaptations that fit the climate. I think that businesses used to feel obligated to stay open certain days because people expected them to be open. Now, I think more businesses feel comfortable figuring out what their specific needs are at that moment and making changes as needed," she wrote.

According to Duguay, stores typically use this time to clean, organize and plan. She noted that the BMP is also looking ahead to how they can fund and provide support for businesses. Duguay is currently working with a grant from the Addison County Economic Development Corporation to draw more visitors to the county area, targeting underserved populations such as the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities from a tourism perspective. They have put out advertisements and social media posts by micro-influencers highlighting local businesses to entice more customers and economic activity. Resulting data from the project will be available in the coming weeks.

To add some life to the quiet winter months before businesses fully reopen in Middlebury, Duguay is also planning a lantern walk for mid-February in town following the success of the Midd Night Stroll in December.



TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS
Entrance to The Stone Mill public market, closed from Jan. 2 to Jan. 24.

As tuition rises, we need to rethink affordability

Each winter, the Board of Trustees meets to set the comprehensive fee for the upcoming year. If the Board votes to raise tuition again in their meeting next week, the Editorial Board calls for greater transparency and increased efforts to ensure affordability.

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

Next week, Middlebury's Board of Trustees will meet to discuss, among other things, tuition for the 2023–24 academic year. They will almost certainly increase tuition, in keeping with the trends of past years. Tuition increased by 4.5% last year and 2.5% the year before.

The Campus has called for increased transparency regarding the college's spending and continues to do so, but it is also vital to ensure that Middlebury is truly affordable — even if the number on the price tag must rise.

...the college can and should reevaluate how it supports students financially as tuition continues to creep skyward to the detriment of those on financial aid and prospective students considering whether they will be able to afford a Middlebury education....

Currently, 51% of Middlebury students receive financial aid, and the college offers need-blind admissions with a commitment to cover all demonstrated need. However, in addition to grants, which don't need to be paid back, the college's financial aid packages include loans and work-study programs.

While the college is nominally affordable under these policies, students still must sacrifice part of their college experience to commit to work-study jobs and leave Middlebury with unwieldy loans to repay. For most colleges, particularly private schools that are not primarily supported by state funding, tuition hikes are par for the course. They will quite likely remain a fact of life at Middlebury. Inflation and increased interest rates mean that the costs of running the college increase as well.

With this in mind, we would love to see clearer breakdowns of how the college makes financial decisions and where it spends its money, including a more detailed description of where the revenue from tuition increases is used. We understand that price increases are not arbitrary. Nonetheless, the college can and should reevaluate how it supports students financially as tuition continues to creep skyward to the detriment of those on financial aid and prospective students considering whether they will be able to afford a Middlebury education.

One of Middlebury's peer institutions provides a compelling example. This academic year, Williams College committed to transitioning away from loans and work-study, relying instead on an entirely grant-based financial aid system. The move is an attempt to provide all Williams students with an equitable experience.

If Middlebury took similar action, then all students could graduate debt-free, as well as fully engage in the Middlebury community and their studies without the strain of a work-study job. Admittedly, moving to an entirely grant-based system would be expensive; Williams' initiative will cost them $6.75 million a year, a move that is more realistic for Williams, which has a much larger endowment than Middlebury does.

However, Middlebury could take notes from Williams in other ways. Unlike Middlebury, Williams covers textbooks and offers heavily-subsidized summer storage for all students on financial aid.

We also suggest that Middlebury make its financial aid offices more accessible to students. One possible strategy would be to require that students meet with their financial aid officer at least once per semester. Such a requirement would take the burden of reaching out off of students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds who may find it more difficult to do so. Additionally, ensuring students are informed and connected to the office might make it easier for them to petition their aid packages, an action that many don't even know is available to them.

If Middlebury wants to tout its financial aid policies, it needs to make sure that those policies actually benefit students in the long run and foster diversity as much as possible. With the likely tuition increase approaching, we ask that the college not only communicate openly about how it uses its money, but also think carefully about how this new revenue can support students on financial aid.

SUSANNA SCHATZ

Afghanistan, an "elephant in the room"

Op-Ed

***Sajia Yaqouby** is a member of the class of 2025.5.*

On Jan. 1, among other visitors and groups of advocates in front of the White House, a large group of Afghans was immediately noticeable.

"LetAfghanGirlsLearn..."

"LetAfghanGirlsLearn..."

This chant carries with it grief and anger; it is also a demand for human rights for Afghanistan women as the Taliban continues to push women out of the public and professional spheres. In a recent order on Dec. 20, the Taliban banned higher education for women after secondary schools have been suspended for over a year.

At 1:30 a.m., my phone rings. It is my friend, my high school classmate in Kabul. After a long pause, I answer her call. "Today was the last day of classes," she said. "I do not want to stay home, I want to study," she added. And what could I tell her? Could I talk about the protest I attended in D.C., shouted for two hours, then left feeling unheard? Would it make any difference? Her whole life was darkened and she was not alone. She is one of the millions of other Afghanistan girls who want to learn, to work and to be free — and now forbidden to do so.

The phrase perfectly describes how the majority of people around the world have responded to the plight of Afghanistan women. They hear about it, avoid talking about it and don't take action.

On the first day of my Winter Term class last year, my professor talked about the "elephant in the room," a common phrase in the states. He refers to it as "an idea or condition, a situation that everyone knows about, that everyone knows is true and that everyone knows it must be dealt with, yet no one does." The phrase perfectly describes how the majority of people around the world have responded to the plight of Afghanistan women. They hear about it, avoid talking about it and don't take action. Afghan women are invisible within the politics of human rights. The violation of human rights anywhere is a violation of human rights everywhere. How will we be able to achieve equality in this part of the globalized world while the other half is fully paralyzed?

Let's take a moment to think about what it must feel like to be a girl in Afghanistan right now and ask ourselves, what is our responsibility to them?

Afghanistan is a failure. A failure of men, politicians and warlords who brought years of disaster to the people of Afghanistan and now deny any responsibility for the pain they have caused. Today, a woman in Afghanistan is not allowed to go to the hospital without a male family member even if she is in critical condition because she does not have the right to move outside the home without a male escort. In the very near future there will not be any female employees able to assist other women in need. Let's take a moment to think about what it must feel like to be a girl in Afghanistan right now and ask ourselves, what is our responsibility to them?

THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

EDITOR IN CHIEF
*Abigail Chang **
MANAGING EDITORS
*Rain Ji **
*Tony Sjodin **
EDITORIAL BOARD DIRECTOR
*Lily Laesch **
EDITORS AT LARGE
Maya Heikkinen
*Rachel Lu **
NEWS DESK
*Brinlea La Barge *†*
Orly Berke
*Lily Jones **
Ryan McElroy
Roya Touran
LOCAL DESK
*Maggie Reynolds *†*
*Sam Lipin **
OPINIONS DESK
*Lily Laesch *†*
*Hannah Sayre **
*Bella Burke **
*Libby Scaperotta **
*Sophia Afsar-Keshmiri **
*Sylvie Shure **
ARTS & CULTURE DESK
*Eliza King Freedman *†*
*Maggie Bryan **
Jack Torpey
Tulip Larson
SPORTS DESK
Jack McGuire†
Owen Park
Ryan Heinzerling
MULTIMEDIA DESK
Devin Santikarma
Daleelah Saleh
PHOTO DESK
Nadia Hare
Corinne Lowmanstone
Tom Nevins
VISUALS DESK
Arthur Furniss
Susanna Schatz
Thea Volpp
COMMUNICATIONS
*Estelle Martin **
Jake Gilbert
Mari Nakamura
Francine Newman
LAYOUT EDITORS
Will Reed
Adelle MacDowell
ONLINE EDITORS
*Eric Burchill *†*
Isaac Mineo
Grace Sandbach
Olivia Pintair
COPY EDITORS
*Madeleine Kaptein **
Manya Kula
Evan Weiss
BUSINESS MANAGER
*David Nicholson **

**Member of Editorial Board*
† Senior Editor

The Campus reserves the right to deny publication of all or part of a submission for any reason. This includes, but is not limited to: the making of assertions based on hearsay; the relation of private conversations; the libelous mention of unverifiable events; the use of vulgar language or personal attacks; unwarranted requests for anonymity.

More information about the paper and its submission policies can be found online at www.middleburycampus.com.

The opinions expressed by contributors to the Opinions section, as well as reviews, columns, editorial comics and other commentary, are views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the newspaper. The Campus welcomes letters to the editor at 250 words or less, or opinions submissions at 800 words or less.

@middleburycampus

@middcampus

The Middlebury Campus

Equal credit representation for STEM students in lab classes

Op-Ed

Clara Sandberg is a member of the class of 2024.5, and Raymond Grocela is a member of the class of 2024.

TOM NEVINS/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Outside Bicentennial Hall, where many STEM majors have their lab classes.

We feel as though we have a pretty good idea of what the average BiHall-er is experiencing. We both took three lab classes in the fall, and one of us was a teaching assistant for a fourth, so we know the junior-sophomore STEM community fairly well.

Although three-lab-class semesters are less common, we find that it is exceedingly typical for junior and sophomore STEM majors to be concurrently taking two classes that have a lab for multiple semesters. This adds an extra six hours of time physically spent in class (two labs x three hours), in addition to whatever homework the lab classes are assigned (usually consisting of pre-lab work and post-lab work each week as well as lab reports). This calculation is based on the typical lab class — but some students in chemistry "super-labs" spend six hours in the lab for that one course. And beyond lab time it's important to account for the hours spent and homework assigned in the three-hour lecture portion of such classes. Students often say that the lecture and lab feel like completely separate classes with separate assignments.

> To demand this much work and time from STEM students and give the same amount of credits to non-STEM students is not a fair practice.

And the kicker is this: What we have just described only accounts for HALF of the credits that a student is expected to take per semester. A six-hour total lab-lecture class only counts for one credit, which is the same number of credits that any other three-hour per week class at Middlebury counts for. All Middlebury students are expected to take four classes per semester which would total 12 hours of class a week (four x three-hour classes), but many STEM students are taking up to 18 hours because of the additional six hours they spend in labs. Nonetheless, this 18-hour course load still receives the same number of credits per semester that a 12-hour course load would.

To demand this much work and time from STEM students and give the same amount of credits to non-STEM students is not a fair practice. Giving additional (partial) credits for lab classes would help to solve this unfair practice by allowing STEM students to take three classes (some with labs) but receive a representative amount of credits so that they can stay on track to graduate. This would also give students more flexibility in their schedules to complete homework and participate in extracurricular activities.

This system would also allow STEM students to earn sufficient credits to meet graduation requirements during their lab-heavy semesters without having to spend much more time in class than their non-STEM major peers. We feel strongly that this would improve mental health amongst overworked STEM students. In addition to less time in class and a more manageable workload, this would help alleviate worries about graduating on time or needing to make up a class in a later semester. It seems reasonable to be giving credits that truly reflect the amount of time actually spent in class. In fact, many other institutions do this as normal practice, giving additional credits for the hours spent in the lab.

Additionally, lack of class availability due to Covid-19 is still very much affecting class registration, which has disproportionately affected STEM majors that require numerous lab classes. Since Covid-19 was an unforeseen roadblock in many STEM students' schedules, it caused them to wait to take lab classes until classes returned to fully in person, meaning students are effectively "behind" in their major. This furthers the need for students to double or triple up in their lab classes.

Another class scheduling issue is that these classes include the three-hour lab sections, which almost always meet from 1:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m., meaning students enrolled in those classes cannot take any courses starting between 12:15 p.m. and 3 p.m. This inflexibility continues to limit the selection of classes that many STEM majors have to choose from and makes it harder to fulfill their major requirements, academic categories and cultures and civilizations distribution requirements required to graduate.

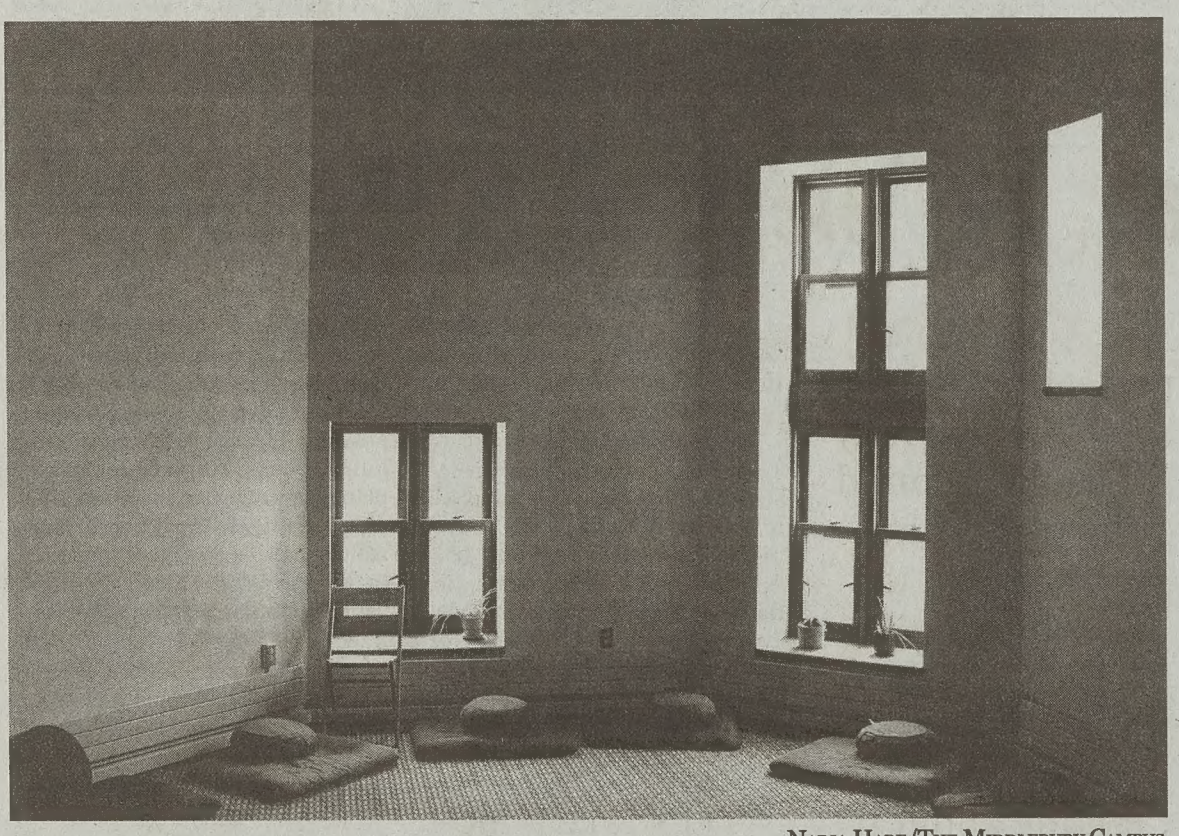
Lastly, we want to talk about Middlebury's recent addition of half-credit classes. Half-credit classes are courses that either meet for around half the amount of time as typical classes at Middlebury or at "half strength." For each of these courses, students are given 0.5 credits, accurately representing the amount of time spent in class. Middlebury has set a precedent for receiving a partial credit for a class that meets for a proportion of a standard one-credit class. Therefore, it is reasonable to give more credits for classes that meet for more time than the typical three hours per week.

The combination of additional time spent in class, the necessity to take two (or more) labs a semester and the extra stress that these STEM students feel makes it paramount that this unfair practice is corrected and that lab courses count for more than one credit.

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK: WHY I RECOMMEND GOING ON A RETREAT

Op-Ed

Yanruo (Alice) Zhang is a member of the class of 2023.



NADIA HARE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

I have always wanted to go to a retreat. For a lot of reasons like desires to escape and heal, and for no reason — just because my heart said so. I also had many hesitations before going. My logical mind had criticized and evaluated the opportunity as unnecessary and even self-indulgent. However, my experience last summer at "Touching the Earth" — a three-week immersive program for young adults on a secluded Vermont homestead that combines Buddhist meditation, ecological learning and various outdoor activities in a small group setting — made me want to urge everyone to go to a long retreat like this one if, or when, opportunities allow.

My retreat was a beautifully impactful experience with a focus on Buddhism and ecology. Other retreats may offer different things, ranging from spiritual healing, fitness through meditation or yoga, family or marriage counseling, etc. Out of the many reasons one should go to a retreat, here are two that are dearest to me based on my experience:

1. They are an opportunity to obtain experiential knowledge.

I think there are many kinds of knowledge in this world, and I categorize most of it as "experiential" and "theoretical." Theoretical knowledge is what we learn in primarily academic settings, such as understanding cellular respiration by doing readings, attending lectures and completing worksheets in class discussions. Experiential knowledge is the embodied knowledge that is addressed little in the "Western" paradigm of learning and is difficult to teach in language or writing, such as the knowledge of self-love, deep listening and nature connection. As students who spend a lot of time listening to lectures and analyzing readings, devoting time to exploring experiential learning is fun, necessary and beneficial. We think, listen and speak so much with our heads that we need some time to practice doing so with our hearts. More people doing and learning to do so nourishes connection, resonation, sincerity and love.

2. They are an opportunity to feel fully supported by a loving community.

Retreats attract like-minded people with similar interests, values and intentions. The mirroring of mindsets, behaviors, emotions and care creates a special and safe place to support every participant. During my retreat experience, connecting with people felt like cutting right into the heart of an onion, whereas in my everyday life people get to know each other by gradually peeling away the layers. In addition, participants have access to professional guidance to move through their journeys, which cultivates a feeling of being held, loved and cherished by flowing compassion and wisdom. It is an opportunity to be vulnerable and be seen as you are.

So, if your mind needs to unwind; if you are curious about changing your lifestyle to include devoting more energy to connecting with nature, other beings and yourself; or if you have some mental or physical pain, numbness and stuckness that you feel needs to be tended to, consider retreats. You will be surprised how much your body and mind both need and love it.

It might not be now or in the near future, but if your heart feels something when you ponder the idea of going to a retreat, take good care of this budding seed, water it when necessary and take the courage to let it burst out from the earth when the time is ripe.

Going to a long retreat takes courage and determination. If you are not ready for one, perhaps start off with something small. Consider joining the Scott Center's upcoming half-day Winter Mindfulness Retreat on Saturday, Jan. 21, or sitting with us on Sunday-night Prajna Meditation Club meetings and sipping some warm chai. Regardless of what you choose, I hope you breathe out, letting go of everything that does not serve you, and breathe in, bringing some awareness, space and ease into your beautiful life. Invitations are out there, and you may accept them when you are ready.

What are the bricks in our wall?

Op-Ed

Ryan Ulen is a member of the class of 2026.

"All in all it's just another brick in the wall." Sung by Pink Floyd, these are the words I hear while walking through the rear entrance of my first-year residential hall, Stewart. I'm welcomed by a can-liner box full of dirty dishes, trashed at the windowsill next to the door. Beneath this box of disregarded porcelain is a sign that reads: "THIS IS NOT A FOOD DROP-OFF PLEASE RETURN YOUR DISHES TO THE DINING HALLS THANK YOU." The heap of leftover food rots: bananas that have become black and crisp, yogurt that has soured into a watered cottage cheese and expired beverages that stain the bottom of cups and mugs.

Adjacent to this mess is a Campus editorial taped to the door of the custodians' office. It's titled "Party with care: Respecting the places where we live and work." Analyzing similar irresponsible behavior found in upperclassmen's residence halls, the Editorial Board writes, "[Students] do not want their belongings or decorations stolen, they do not want people peeing in their stairwells, and they do not want holes punched in their walls." Yet, "the messes that we — as adults — make, are cleaned by custodial staff who are already overworked and underpaid."

I had hoped that the destructive and irresponsible behaviors exhibited on campus were unique to upperclassmen's residence halls. But the Stewart residents show their carelessness too. They leave their dishes in common areas. Thus, they assume the responsibility to keep our campus clean is not their own. All of this combined is evidence enough for me to make this claim: Middlebury as an institution is not fostering communal interactions effectively.

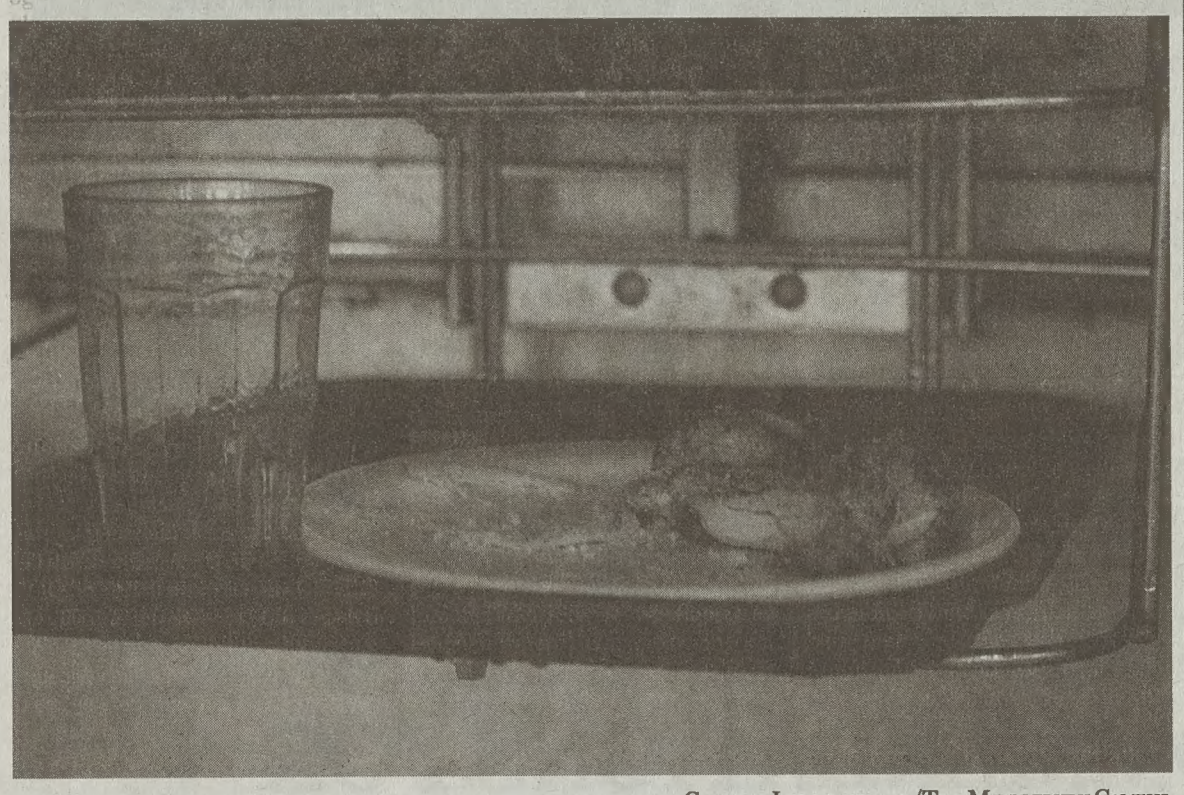
If generations of Middlebury students are affected by the irresponsible behavior of their peers, then the problem is institutional. If first years are throwing dishes upon the clearly marked "THIS IS NOT A FOOD DROP-OFF" windowsill, abusing the custodians' job description, all while juniors and seniors are damaging school property when partying (at the expense of custodians' time to fix it), then Middlebury is failing to instill community values from orientation to graduation.

I do not know why this entitlement complex exists, especially at a place devoted to progressive scholarship. These should not logically co-exist, but in fact there are students at Middlebury whose mindsets are primarily individualistic and barriered. If Middlebury's curriculum, as cited in its mission statement, is to "foster the inquiry, equity, and agency necessary for [students] to practice ethical citizenship," then either (1) this curriculum is failing or (2) it is impracticable for people whose mindsets are individualistic to interact responsibly within a community.

I believe that ethical citizenship coincides with upholding responsibility within a community. As citizens of our dorm, it is our responsibility — not solely the responsibility of those the institution hires — to keep the facility clean. As citizens of Middlebury College, it is our responsibility to keep the campus functional; as citizens of the world, it is our responsibility to leave spaces better than we found them. These actions and mindsets inform what a community is.

Thus, our campus has a dire issue: We are not a community. In fact, we are a place of barriered persons. There are many theories that proliferate beyond this op-ed as to why, but the fact remains: Students at Middlebury are not interacting ethically with other members of the Middlebury community. The walls around each and every one of us are built high and thick, and not even Middlebury's "inquiry, equity" or "agency" can bulldoze these walls. I fear that nothing can.

"All in all it's just another brick in the wall." What walls are built around you, me, and us, and what are the bricks that make up each of these walls? This is the question that is essential for learning to become ethical citizens of the communities in which we currently and will come to live. I believe each and every student here can imagine the ideal scene: an entrance to Stewart that is without dirty dishes, one that residents and staff are equally responsible for maintaining. But is this feasible? That becomes a question to each and every person who is a part of this community.



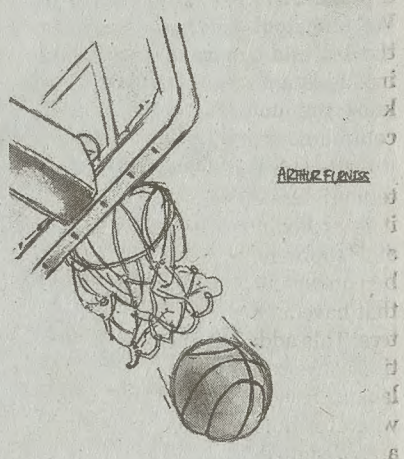
CORINNE LOWMANSTONE/THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

TO BALL OR NOT TO BALL: Are varsity ballers tarnishing the integrity of IM basketball?

(Spoiler: The answer is yes.)

Op-Ed

Liv Cohen is a member of the class of 2023.5.



ARTHUR FLYNISS

The heavy thud of the balls against the glossy gym floors. The shiny squeak of tennis shoes. Grunts and laughs and the haunting melodic tones of Roscoe Dash and Waka Flocka Flame's "No Hands." This is intramural (IM) basketball. This is a haven. This is what I call home.

I first began my journey into IM basketball last winter. The season was magical — a warm solace amidst the biting cold winter month. I had finally found the perfect outlet to display my hard-earned skills from my one season of JV basketball in high school. Naturally, I helped continue my team's dynasty into the spring season. At our first game, my team pulled up: confident, relaxed, ready to ball. We were met with an intense rival team, one with impossible skill and strength. This was a team bolstered with the skills of varsity basketball players on their roster. Suddenly, the once whimsical and laid-back IM league had been greatly intensified by the influx of the varsity basketball players onto the court. Newly released from their winter season, these athletes were ready to school us with their hard-earned skills. We went into the first half down ten, yet nonetheless we dug down, ready for the challenge, and we managed to tie it up near the end. Unfortunately, our star player Griffin Clinton '24, dislocated his shoulder in what would have been a game-changing lay up. Our team was wrought with despair. From the shadows, a varsity basketball player stepped up to join us, and with the help of this generous friend, we won the game. In the aftermath of the glory, the blood and the tears, I couldn't help but feel uneasy about the outcome.

Not to say I do not admire the technical precision of Jaden Bobbett's '25 lay up, but does it have a place among the humble courts of us mere, non-collegiate ballers? Doth one dare tell Noah Osher '23.5 that a shooter cannot shoot? Or can we turn to Charley Moore '23.5 and steal the well-deserving thunder that enshrouds his gallop amongst the hardwood? May we please be allowed one small opportunity to 'ball' without being quite literally crossed up by the strength and fortitude of these forces of nature?

I fear that this article will follow me into the spring season, so let me end with this: As long as varsity basketball players play, I will recruit their forces for my team — if not, my honor and pride will be obliterated by their skills. But please, can we as a larger community reckon with these athletes and allow us (mere mortals) a glimmering moment to shine on the court?

Saving higher education from itself

Op-Ed

Griffin Fill is a member of the class of 2023.5.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis appointed six new members to the Board of Trustees at the New College of Florida on Jan. 6. It's a small, public liberal arts institution, with about 700 students, a unique teaching style focused on academic experimentation over a strict curriculum, and an impressive track record of producing impressive alumni. It also has a reputation for being the most progressive college in Florida. Or it, at least, had that reputation, as the new Trustees are a set of hard-right firebrands that have been tasked with taking the college down to its studs and building a new institution in its place. The most prominent of the six is Christopher Rufo, a hardliner at the far-right Claremont Institute who made his name attacking critical race theory and "gender ideology." DeSantis' decision is a particularly brazen move, but it is not an isolated act. Higher education has been considered a bastion of the left for some time, but as conservatives have become more statist and assertive, they now seem willing to use the government to cudgel universities. And universities are more vulnerable than ever.

Everyone who believes in an independent and freethinking university system should feel obligated to stand up to this sort of petty authoritarianism. But in truth, America's universities have done little recently to engender the respect of the American people. Forty two percent of Americans think that colleges are hurting the country, and countless more have serious issues with the state of higher ed. If higher learning wants to survive in an increasingly polarized and antagonistic period of politics, it needs to make more friends, and fast.

The most glaring and practical problem is one of finance. Universities have spent more and more on frivolous line items, and tuition has, unsurprisingly, gone up. It has reached a point that no matter how much administrators talk about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, their decisions actually price out impoverished and disproportionately minority Americans, forcing them to depend on unreliable financial aid, crippling student loans and exhausting work-study requirements.

But this only scratches the surface of the problem that universities face. America's greatest educational institutions have painted a massive target on their own collective back. Their policies have made them appear painfully out of touch, animated by truly bizarre priorities, such as an obsessive focus on language and wording. Regardless of intentions, it seems that many Americans see universities' attempts to police language as somewhere between Orwellian and plainly idiotic. Just last week, USC's School of Social Work banned the use of the term 'field work' in their curriculum, because of supposed racist and anti-immigrant connotations. Calling 'field work' racist or objectionable is an insult to the millions of farmers and laborers, of all races, that go to work in the fields every day in this country. Perhaps West Point should ban discussions of 'battlefields' next? Fighting racism is a laudable goal, but the only people universities help with this kind of behavior are right-wingers looking for ammunition.

The self-destructive behavior of American higher education is far broader than this, however. Take their stance on affirmative action, which universities have failed miserably to sell to the public. A stunning 73% of Americans are against race or ethnicity factoring into college admissions, and administrators across the country still seem to be reeling at the possibility it might be threatened by the courts.

Campus speech is perhaps the most blatant failure of American higher ed to protect its image. Over 60% of college students across the country don't feel comfortable expressing themselves, according to a Heterodox Academy survey. On the topic of universities failing to protect free speech, Middlebury is more guilty than most. There's no value in rehashing history, but what is clear is that our school has a reputation. If you Google "Middlebury College," you'll find a column on the first page of results describing "A Violent Attack on Free Speech at Middlebury" from The Atlantic. It shouldn't have to be said, but that's not the sort of PR you want for an educational institution.

By this point, many of you will be disputing the facts of what I said, or how I've laid them out. Fair enough. This isn't all the fault of the colleges and universities. I agree. I do think that America has a somewhat warped and unfairly negative view of modern higher ed. I love Middlebury from the bottom of my heart. But that doesn't matter. In many ways, the facts don't even matter. Individual cases can be argued back and forth, but the broader issues remain. We have an image problem, a bad one. That's the reality.

The way to fix that is pretty simple. We need to do better, both as people, and as institutions, to welcome opposing viewpoints — even when we find them hurtful or unpleasant. We need to do more to foster open debate and stop shaming people for political differences. We can stand up for what we believe in, but we shouldn't shout down those who disagree. If students, faculty and administrators show the public that we are responsible custodians of the storied traditions of the liberal arts, they will support us in the coming battles to defend education as we know it. But if we come off as spoiled fanatics, they'll feed us to the wolves. Make no mistake, without popular support, every educational institution in this country is vulnerable to government pressure. This isn't just about public universities, who ultimately answer to government bodies. Even schools like Middlebury take government funds, and money can always have strings attached.

I'll end on a personal note. When I learned to drive a car, I remember being told to think about what other drivers will do, not what they should do. Being correct doesn't matter if you're dead. I'll provide an amended version for American universities. Being correct doesn't matter if you've been defunded and taken over by right-wing extremists. Higher ed certainly needs to be saved from an asinine and authoritarian hard-right. But it also needs to be saved from itself.

HEART OF AFGHANISTAN SHOWCASES AFGHAN HISTORY THROUGH MUSIC

By ELIZA KING FREEDMAN
Senior Arts and Culture Editor

Heart of Afghanistan graced Mahaney Arts Center on Jan. 13 with a performance, just under a year after their spring 2022 debut and days after their largest performance yet at the Kennedy Center. The group is made up of four performers: Afghan soap opera star and famous singer Ahmad Fanoos on vocals & harmonium, his sons Elham Fanoos and Mehran Fanoos on piano and violin and Hamid Akbar on tabla. The group performs songs that communicate Afghan history in both Pashto and Dari (Afghanistan's two most common languages), ranging from Afghan folk songs to ballads inspired by the Afghan poet Rumi to modern love songs.

After the Soviet-Afghan War ended in 1989, many of the Mujahideen, the Afghan rebel fighters funded by the CIA, didn't have homes to return to in Afghanistan and studied as refugees in Pakistani madrassas. Upon their return to Afghanistan, they ruled the country in a state of lawlessness that evolved into the first Taliban rule of the country, which lasted from 1996 to 2001. During that first period of control, the Taliban banned music. So when the United States retreated from Afghanistan in 2021, many artists and young people in Afghanistan anticipated another music ban, which was instituted only three months after U.S. troops left the country. Like many families, the Fanoos family fled Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in 2021. It wasn't until this past year that they were able to reunite and form Heart of Afghanistan.

Heart of Afghanistan is presented by American Voices, an NGO that is committed to presenting cultural exchanges in nations emerging from conflict and isolation. American Voices first came into contact with Ahmad Fanoos and his sons in 2011 through a project dedicated to musical training and collaboration in Afghanistan during the war. Ten years later, after being four of the over 124,000 people airlifted out of Afghanistan by the U.S. military, Heart of Afghanistan formed as a group dedicated to sharing the music of their home country that persists beyond the last 40 years of conflict.

The performance began with a minutes-long standing ovation as the performers walked onto the stage. What seemed like a fitting reaction to the start of the show, at least with regard to the origins of the group and all that they have endured, became more meaningful when it became clear that much of the audience was from Afghanistan, and many performance-goers had traveled for hours to see the group. This information came out as the performers almost jokingly asked the audience if anyone was from a specific Afghan province before they played each song, and as more hands went up with each song, they started to interact more. The lead singer, Ahmad, who was largely silent in between songs toward the beginning of the performance, began speaking in Dari to the audience, and, as the show went on, it became more and more interactive, as it became clear how much the audience and the performers shared.

> "I really appreciated the connection between the performers, especially knowing that they were family. It's amazing when a performance comes across as valuable and exciting for the performers just as much as the audience..."

"I really appreciated the connection between the performers, especially knowing that they were family. It's amazing when a performance comes across as valuable and exciting for the performers just as much as the audience, and I felt that in their interactions with the crowd and in seeing and feeling how moved everybody in the room was," reflected audience-member Captain Rudolph '23.5.

COURTESY PHOTO
Ahmad Fanoos singing and playing the harmonium.

COURTESY PHOTO
The members of Heart of Afghanistan.

Not only were the songs that the performers played moving, but they demonstrated mastery of their individual instruments — and of the combination of their instruments. It was especially intriguing to see how the performers blended the piano and the violin with the more regionally-traditional harmonium and tabla. The harmonium operates like a floor organ, with a hand pump controlling the volume of the instrument. The tabla, also played while sitting on the floor, is a set of two drums, the Zeal and the Bam, that is tuned throughout the performance by putting pressure on the drumhead.

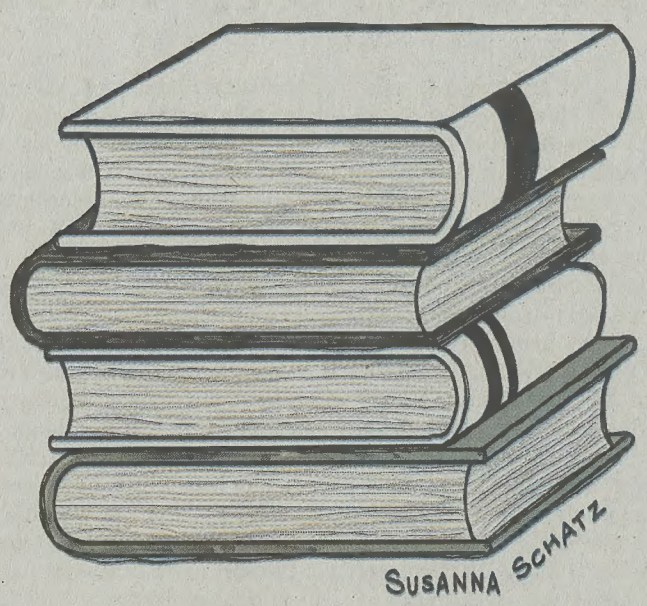
"The tabla was fascinating in its expression of sound. By being able to play certain pitches, the instrument pierced through the theater with satisfying fullness. Mastery over the music was apparent with every member of the ensemble," said concert-goer and music student Alex Stimpson '23.5.

It was a privilege to sit in the audience of Heart of Afghanistan's performance on Friday, both because of the music played and because of the indescribable exchange that happened between performers and audience members. The performers were masterful, and their music was beautiful, but it was truly special to watch them meet their audience members and to see their performance become a dedication to the people before them. What happened in Robison Hall that night was much more than just a performance, it felt like a coming home, and for Middlebury College to be the humble host of such an event was an honor all its own.

NICHE READS: NOVEL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGY MAJORS

BY SYLVIE SHURE
Opinions Editor

If you struggle to find time for fun reading, this is the spot for you. Niche Reads recommends novels that relate to academic (or other) interests so you can explore a new book while still feeling productive. Check back each week for more cool books.



There are few topics literature explores better than human nature. Why do we make the decisions we make? How do we relate to the people around us? What does it mean to be a person at all? Arguably, nearly every novel ever written is about people, but these three books are especially focused on humanity itself.

The novels mentioned below look into relationships between individuals and society, between generations and between people. They are all beautifully written and relatively short, making them rewarding choices for the busy college student.

"Euphoria" by Lily King

In the 1930s, anthropologist Andrew Bankson, working in the jungles of New Guinea, stumbles into the orbit of Nell Stone and her husband Schuyler Fenwick (Fen), a magnetic couple studying the nearby Tam tribe. As the three of them begin to work together, they fall into vicious and ultimately life-threatening competition, caught in a web of love and jealousy.

"Euphoria" is a gripping story of romance and revenge, but also of the study of anthropology. As the three researchers become more intertwined in their own volatile lives, the novel explores the ethics of treating human beings as objects of academic interest. Aside from simply endangering their own lives and relationships, Bankson, Fen and Nell also endanger the communities they're studying.

Beyond its thought-provoking content, "Euphoria" is worth reading for its beautiful prose and fascinating characters. At its core, it's a love story and a gorgeous one at that. "Euphoria" is lush and enthralling, as well as an impressive display of humanity.

You should read this book if you're drawn to romances, if you like books with a strong sense of place or if you enjoy books that focus on interpersonal relationships.

"Homegoing" by Yaa Gyasi

In 18th century Ghana, two half-sisters, born in different villages, lead very different lives. Effia marries an Englishman and lives in luxuriant comfort while her sister, Esi, is sold into slavery in America. The novel follows their two bloodlines, examining every generation from the 1700s to the modern day.

"Homegoing" is stunning in its scope and brilliance. Gyasi has a remarkable talent for character building, moving quickly from one richly developed and compelling protagonist to the next. She skillfully demonstrates the ties that bind people together, as well as the intimate connection between past and present.

This novel is ambitious and visionary, and it delivers on its promises. Gyasi uses the unique form, which allows the reader to focus on issues far bigger than any one character's story, to explore the history of being Black in America. "Homegoing" is a remarkable piece of American literature.

You should read this book if you're interested in American history, if you like books with experimental structures or if you appreciate vivid characters.

"The Emissary" by Yoko Tawada

This science-fiction novel takes place after Japan suffers an unnamed disaster, and children throughout the country take on the characteristics of the elderly, with frail bodies and uncanny wisdom. At the same time, the seemingly immortal older generations are spry and curious. "The Emissary" follows a young boy named Mumei and his grandfather Yoshiro through their daily life as they move through this strange, dystopian world.

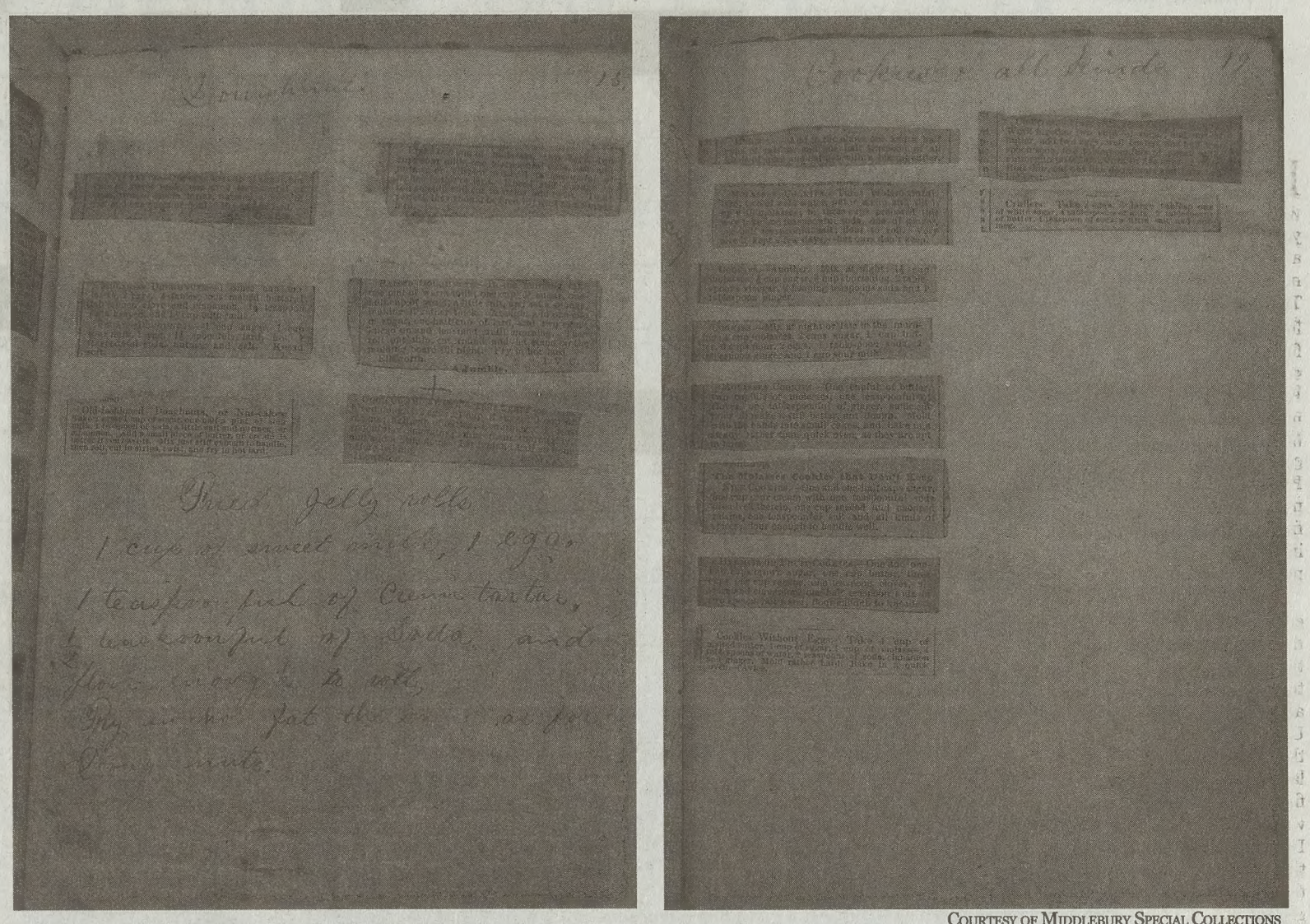
Although "The Emissary" is largely enveloped by mystery and uneasiness, it remains a funny and charming novel. At under 200 pages, it is a quick read that will certainly leave an impact. The novel explores intergenerational relationships and the ways people care for themselves and each other in the wake of disaster.

Quirky, sad and sweet, this short novel will leave you with much to ponder. Mumei and Yoshiro are irresistible characters, with their gentle relationship and their dogged optimism.

You should read this novel if you want a fast read, if you like open-ended books or if you're looking for something thought-provoking yet light.

FROM THE ARCHIVES: MAKING RECIPES FROM A LATE 19TH CENTURY COOKBOOK

By TIFFANY LI
Contributing Writer



Photos of recipes from Special Collections' Cookbook.

COURTESY OF MIDDLEBURY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

"From the Archives" is an opportunity for various writers to visit the Middlebury Special Collections and write about a different artifact each week. The Special Collections boasts over 10,000 historic items, and through this column we encourage writers to explore not only the college's history, but also the history of the world around us.

In the bracing winter cold, the prospect of warm, freshly baked treats seems all the more tempting. This homemade recipe book from the late 19th century offers a view into baked goods that people would have enjoyed 150 years ago, containing handwritten recipes and recipes cut and pasted from newspapers. Within the blue cover paper, recipes for all kinds of cakes, cookies, doughnuts, pies and breads abound.

The recipe book was bought in 2014 by Emily Bogin '16 as part of an exhibit Bogin curated called "Good Things to Eat: Recipes and Communities from 1827 to the Present." A Special Collections blog post wrote that, "[t]his new exhibit focuses on the ways in which food has, and continues to facilitate community, both at Middlebury and beyond." The recipe book alludes to a rich historical context, from the shifting social landscape to important technological and economic developments of the time.

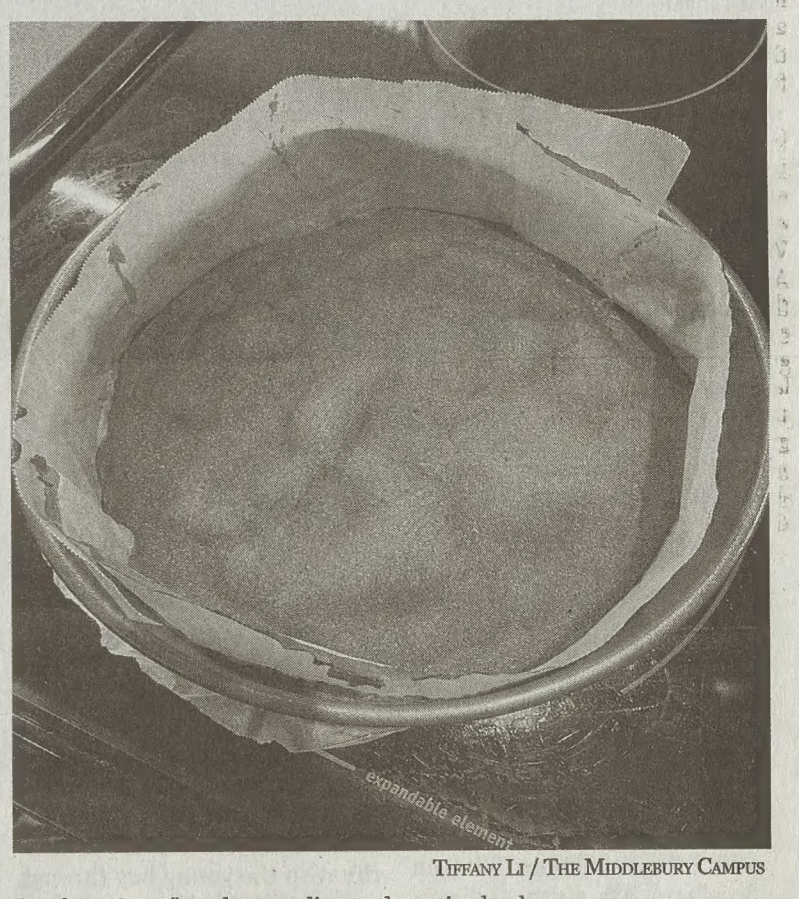
The book hints at how American gender roles were changing in the latter half of the 19th century. At the time, it was popular for women to begin using dinner parties and social events to advance the social status of their families and husbands. While this phenomenon tied women's reputations and identities to domesticity, it also gave women some responsibility over the family's social mobility and provided a novel way for them to contribute economically. As these dinner parties became more popular, women needed to learn how to prepare food appropriate for such events. Recipes and cookbooks targeted towards these special occasions thus gained importance.

The ingredients in the recipes correspond with items found in modern pantries. Baking soda, appearing in many recipes in this book, became industrially manufacturable in the latter half of the 19th century due to the invention of the Solvay process. Wheat flour also grew in popularity during this time period. This rise in American wheat consumption stemmed from improvements in flour milling techniques, trade infrastructure and agricultural development. Sugar also became a more prominent baking ingredient. Whereas previously, alternatives such as molasses or brown sugar may have been cheaper, new processing methods now made white sugar less expensive and more accessible. 'Domestic advisor' authors at the time began to advocate white sugar's merits in baking. Due to all of these innovations in ingredients, cake recipes became more elaborate and varied in the latter half of the 19th century.

I decided to try baking one of the handwritten recipes from the recipe book, and settled on something called "Graham Gems," muffin-like cakes that were extremely popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion museum. They are named after Sylvester Graham, an early American advocate of dietary reform. I decided to make these because I had never heard of this baked good before and wanted to revive this bit of historical popular culture.

The recipe calls for Graham flour, regular flour, "sour milk," baking soda, molasses and salt. Unable to find Graham flour, which is more coarsely ground, I substituted standard whole wheat flour. I also used buttermilk instead of sour milk; both provide the acidity needed to activate the baking soda. Like most of the recipes in the book, there were almost no assembly instructions, only a note to "bake in a quick oven." After mixing everything together, I baked at 380°F, which I thought might approximate a "quick oven" (I now believe the recipe may have required a hotter temperature for the 'gems' to rise more effectively). The final product was very slightly sweet, plain-looking, chewy and somewhat dense — more like bread than a modern muffin or cake. I don't think this health-conscious recipe is very representative of the more indulgent desserts in the rest of the book, many of which include cupfuls of sugar, butter or lard, but it does carry some interesting history.

In historical recipes, where instructions may be sparse and the quality or meaning of ingredients may have changed, it can be hard to know whether modern attempts at re-creation are accurate to what the original version would have been. Regardless, this recipe book provides a glance into one kitchen of the past, offering a representation of greater themes and trends of the time.



TIFFANY LI / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

"Graham Gems" made according to the recipe book.

WHAT WE LEARNED: WINTER BREAK EDITION

By SOPHIA AFSAR-KESHMIRI
Opinions Editor

"What We Learned" is a column encouraging students to reflect on what they learn in and out of the classroom. Despite filling out surveys every semester and chatting with friends at meals, it can be easy to avoid introspection. "What We Learned" offers a place for writers and readers to reflect on their experiences both on campus and off.

At the close of each semester, Middlebury students scatter across the globe — returning home and traveling to wherever they will spend their breaks. Although it's easy to think of time off from school as a break from learning, the environments and experiences in which we find ourselves in between semesters gives way for a whole new type of learning. And we find that what we learn while apart might actually be helpful to our peers and inform our experiences on campus. This article therefore seeks to answer one question: What did we learn over break?

"I learned how to make [Mole], a traditional Mexican dish that my grandmother makes," Madelyn Garza '25 said.

Having witnessed the dish's preparation, but never cooked it herself, Garza seized the opportunity to learn something she had been curious about for a while. "This [was] the most important thing I learned over the break because it is one of my favorite dishes, and I was able to spend time with my grandmother."

She can see herself in her grandmother's shoes one day.

"Now that I've learned how to make this dish I am able to pass it down and teach future generations in my family about a dish that is so important to my family," she said.

She says the free-time that break offers allowed her to have this moment, one that brought her great happiness.

"I feel a lot closer to my grandmother and connected to my culture," she said. "This is a very hard dish to make, and now that I know how to make it, I feel joy."

Spending her winter break at home, Hannah Sayre '24.5 also reconnected with loved ones during her time away from Middlebury.

"When I was home for break, I was reminded of the fact that I really appreciate the two or three close friends that I have from high school," she said. "I may not talk to them all the time when I'm at school, but it's always a joy to catch up with them, and they hold a special place in my heart. I think it's nice to know that I will always have a community in my hometown."

Yanruo (Alice) Zhang '23 discovered more about how to care for herself.

"Setting a routine is helpful in maintaining a relatively healthy lifestyle and sanity," she said.

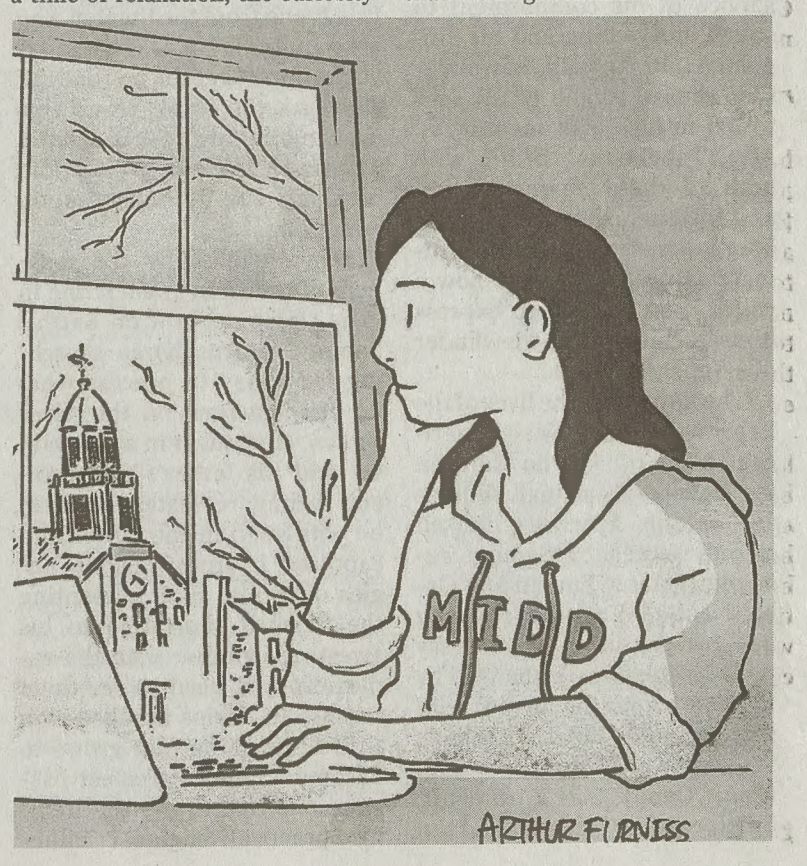
When asked how she came to this realization, she answered, "[I credit] the Bread Loaf Mountain Zen sangha [community]... and all my friends that held me accountable and made doing those things fun."

"Break leaves more spaciousness in my life, allows me to connect better with my body, listening to what it would like to do," Sayre reflected.

Although the semester doesn't offer the same amount of free-time, Zhang is determined to use what she's learned moving forward by picking and choosing things from her routine to commit to.

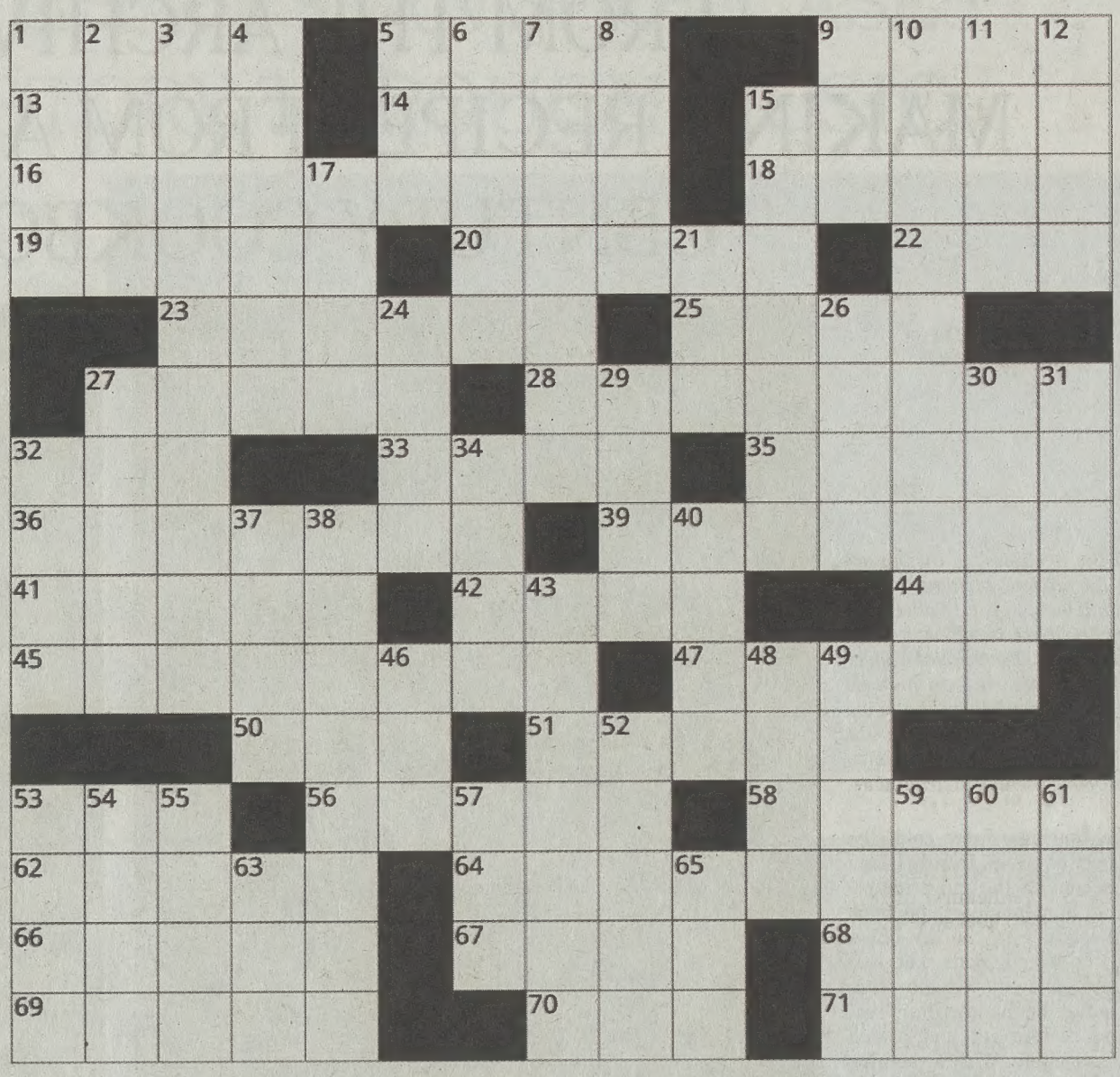
"It made me happier," she said. "I felt that my life was more organized and spacious."

Although semester breaks offer a time of relaxation, the curiosity that fuels our learning throughout the semester does not just turn off. Time off from school may provide less obvious moments of learning, but nonetheless, they exist, and they are easier to find than we might think.



CROSSWORD FOR YOU!

By WILLIAM REED
Layout Editor



ACROSS

1 Whispery video acronym
5 Place your _____
9 Four corners state
13 Breathing abnormality
14 K thru 12
15 Small earthen pot
16 Like the snow after a mild snowstorm, perhaps
18 Register, to Brits
19 Clark's partner
20 Transparent
22 Rum ____ Tugger ("Cats" cat)
23 Card game for two
25 Sharon of "Boston Public"
27 "Steppenwolf" author
28 Week ending J-term
32 ____ choy
33 Brooklyn ballers
35 Vacation time, for short
36 Quick impressions
39 Middlebury building whose exterior looks great after a snow storm
41 "Tiny Bubbles" singer
42 Silicon Valley sch.
44 Legal office worker (Abbr.)
45 Like scuba diving
47 Chap
50 With 58-Across, a perk of J-Term that the Middlebury admin. loves to boast on school tours
51 Nose cavity
53 Letters on an ale
56 Other spelling of ____ Root on Middlebury's baseball team
58 See 50-Across
62 Benjamin $100 bill
64 Most petite
66 Sauna cover
67 Yankee nickname starting in 2004
68 Sea eagle
69 Little hooter
70 Singer Sumac
71 The "S" of GPS: Abbr.

DOWN

1 Shrinking Asian sea
2 Levelheaded
3 January's holiday weekend
4 Some museum displays that cover walls
5 King or queen
6 Vote into office
7 Liberals, Progressives
8 1980 NFL MVP Brian of Cleveland
9 Decorative vase
10 Cozy sweater for wintertime
11 Not worth ____ (valueless)
12 Captain's place
15 They do the thinking and have two hemispheres
17 Those: Sp.
21 Priest's robe
24 Eye care brand (solution)
26 "I smell ____!"
27 Motorcyclist's invitation
29 PC or Mac bailout keys
30 Robin Hood's friend Allan-____
31 John of "The Best Damn Sports Show Period"
32 Singer Erykah
34 Latin 101 verb
37 Prefix with stat
38 Midwest region with many ears
40 Centers of activity
43 J-Term month (this one's too easy!)
46 "Get it?"
48 Milk: Prefix
49 Skateboard moves
52 Self-evident truth
53 Opposite of prefix endo-
54 With 55-Down, where Midd kids ski
55 See 54-Down
57 Nabokov novel
59 Unsubstantial
60 IRS IDs
61 Leave in, to an editor
63 Golfer's gadget
65 Confidentiality document, for

REEL CRITIC: "THE FABELMANS"

By JACK TORPEY
Arts & Culture Editor

He made us afraid to go in the water with "Jaws." He gave the world its most beloved whip-wielding adventure hero in "Raiders of the Lost Ark." He even resurrected the dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park." Now, with "The Fabelmans," Steven Spielberg has given audiences the story they didn't know they wanted: his own. Sure, the semi-autobiographical premise doesn't scream "blockbuster excitement" like many of the director's biggest hits. Scale and spectacle, however, are not the trademarks of Spielberg's filmography that have made him possibly the most revered director in history. They are certainly integral to his mass appeal, but it has always been the way that Spielberg puts them in service of his commitment to sound storytelling and his singular, childlike sense of wonder that causes people of all ages to fall in love with his movies. "The Fabelmans" brims with both of these characteristics, and together, they make Spielberg's latest a warm, disarmingly earnest portrait of how a young man learned to express himself through the viewfinder of a Super 8 camera.

The film traces the lives of the Fabelmans, the Jewish American family of six who stand in for Spielberg's actual siblings and parents. Spielberg himself is represented by Sammy Fabelman (Mateo Zoryan and Gabriel LaBelle), who as a young boy growing up in New Jersey finds his life forever changed by his first trip to the movies with his parents, Mitzi (Michelle Williams) and Burt Fabelman (Paul Dano). As a director, Spielberg has always had an uncanny knack for staging certain scenes in such a way that allows the audience to perceive action as if through the eyes of a child, evoking all the innocence and simple wonder at the world that comes with that perspective. The opening of "The Fabelmans" is one of those scenes. Watching Mitzi and Burt gently convince Sammy to enter the theater as he lingers fearfully outside the box office, we identify with the young boy through our own bittersweet recollections of the times our parents had to work up our courage. Once the showing of Cecil B. DeMille's "The Greatest Show on Earth" begins, Sammy's wide-eyed amazement at the moving pictures flashing across the screen causes us to join him in viewing what is objectively a dated, contrived film as nothing short of magical. One of "The Fabelmans'" most captivating shots is of Sammy sitting in the car next to his mother on the ride home from the theater. She asks him, "What was your favorite part?" but the boy doesn't answer — he stares ahead, his eyes unblinking, lost in a daze. Thanks to Spielberg's direction, we share a bit of that sensation with him.

Overwhelmed by the mayhem of the train crash scene in "The Greatest Show on Earth," Sammy returns home searching for a way to process what he has just seen on the silver screen. He finds it in a toy train set and his father's film camera. Sammy recreates the crash he witnessed in the movie and captures it from various angles on 8 mm film, presenting the finished short film to his awestruck mother with the explanation, "I need to see them crash." So begins an obsession with filmmaking that grows to become Sammy's greatest passion, one that draws the ire of his practical engineer father and forms a rift with his mother when his camera accidentally captures an act of infidelity. In the end, though, it is the unceasing desire and unique talent with which Sammy chases his cinematic dreams that secures the support of his parents and puts him on the path to Hollywood history.

A time jump shortly after Sammy's seminal screening introduces us to a teenage Spielberg stand-in played endearingly by newcomer Gabriel LaBelle. The cast surrounding him are just as noteworthy, with Paul Dano lending quiet decency to his portrayal of Spielberg's father and Judd Hirsch dominating a pivotal scene as Spielberg's eccentric uncle, who pushes the budding filmmaker to pursue a life in the arts. But despite the admirable acting done to honor the men in the director's upbringing, it is Michelle Williams in the role of Spielberg's mother who shines brightest. As a concert-level pianist who never got the chance to prove her talent, Mitzi finds a kindred spirit in her son when he discovers his artistic inclination towards cinema. She nurtures his passion, imploring him, "You do what your heart says you have to." Williams is incandescent in the role, unafraid to delve into the manic fits of depression that often overtook Spielberg's mother, yet always remaining true to what the woman ultimately was to her son: a source of light and inspiration.

Her line — "You do what your heart says you have to" — captures the theme of "The Fabelmans," a film about how pursuing what you love will always bring you into both conflict and communion with who you love. For Steven Spielberg, what was never a question. It could have been different, though. His parents could have brought their young son to a baseball game, or they could have put a trumpet in his hands. But they didn't — they took him to the movies. On behalf of anyone who has ever seen a Spielberg film, thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Fabelman.

COURTESY PHOTO

Erin Nicholas '22 honored as finalist for NCAA Woman of the Year

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

The NCAA honored Erin Nicholas '22 as a finalist for their 2022 Woman of the Year award on Jan. 12.

Nicholas, who compiled an enormous list of accolades during her time at Middlebury, excelled for both the field hockey team and the women's lacrosse team at Middlebury. Across both sports, Nicholas won six National Championships (four with field hockey and two with lacrosse), was awarded the 2022 DIII Honda Athlete of the Year and compiled an overall record of 151–9 in games played at Middlebury.

The NCAA created their Woman of the Year program in 1991 to honor athletic prowess, academic achievement and community service for women across the entirety of the NCAA. Each year, a selection committee identifies nine finalists (three from each division of the NCAA) for the Woman of the Year award and then picks an overall winner. This year, the selection committee named MIT's Karenna Groff the overall winner of the award.

Nicholas is the fifth Panther to ever receive this prestigious accolade and is also the first person to represent either the women's lacrosse team or the field hockey team.

Outside of athletics, Nicholas was also honored for her academic achievements and community service. Nicholas graduated from Middlebury summa cum laude with a degree in molecular biology and biochemistry and was a six time NESCAC all-academic honoree. She also served as a campus ambassador for the organization Morgan's Message, which seeks to eliminate stigma surrounding student-athlete mental health struggles.

COURTESY OF MIDDLEBURY ATHLETICS

Erin Nicholas '22 raises an NCAA field hockey National Championship trophy.

Spectators' guide: how to keep up with the panthers during J-Term

By OWEN PARK
Sports Editor

The winter sports season is in full swing, and competition is heating up in anticipation of the postseason. Here is a complete look at this week's home events:

Women's Ice Hockey (8–4–1) vs. Bowdoin: Friday, Jan. 20 at 7 p.m. & Saturday, Jan. 21 at 3 p.m. @ Chip Kenyon Arena

After a lengthy road trip that concluded with a pair of wins against Colby, women's ice hockey returns to Middlebury this weekend for a double header against Bowdoin. The Panthers look to continue their four-game winning streak against the Polar Bears at Chip Kenyon Arena. This matchup comes at a critical juncture in the Panthers' season, as they hope to push for a top seed in the NESCAC Championships. This will be the team's last home matchup until their match against Wesleyan in February.

Men's and Women's Track and Field, Middlebury Winter Classic: Saturday, Jan. 21 at 12 p.m. @ Virtue Field House

Both men's and women's track and field hit the ground running at the Snowflake Invitational, breaking the school 60m records and edging out UVM to take first place. The Panthers will look to build off of their early success as they host the Middlebury Winter Classic in Virtue Field House, the last home event for the Panthers until Feb. 11.

Women's (3–3) and Men's (3–3) Swimming and Diving vs. Hamilton & Williams: Saturday, Jan. 21 at 1 p.m. @ Natatorium

The swim and dive teams will host Hamilton and Williams this weekend. This meet presents an amazing opportunity for the Panthers to make a run for a high seed in the NESCAC Championships. These meets fall on each team's Senior Weekend and kick off a stretch of home events leading up to the NESCAC Championships.

Women's Basketball (10–6) vs. Williams: Saturday, Jan. 21 at 2 p.m. @ Pepin Gymnasium

Since the season began, womens' basketball has run with their season and haven't looked back. The Panthers strong record places them second in the NESCAC standings, and the team will be pushing to bolster their record against Williams. With a slew of in-conference matchups approaching, the team will be looking to continue their impressive form as they try to secure a top seed in the NESCAC Championships.

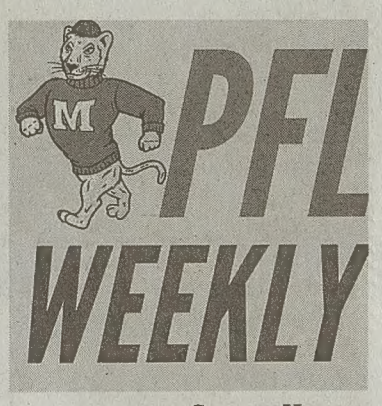
Men's Squash (7–3) vs. Tufts: Sunday, Jan. 22 at 11 a.m.; vs. Amherst: Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 4 p.m. @ Botswick Family Squash Center

After a long journey on the road, men's squash will return home for their second home contest of the season against Tufts. Coming off of a bumpy stretch of matches against in and out of conference opponents, the Panthers will work to take back momentum heading into their Senior Weekend game against Amherst. These will be the last home matches before the NESCAC Championships in February.

Women's Squash (9–1) vs. Tufts: Sunday, Jan. 22 at 11 a.m.; vs. Amherst: Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 4 p.m. @ Botswick Family Squash Center

Women's squash continues to soar, now returning home after three months on the road and boasting an impressive record of 9–1. The team's road to a high seed in the NESCAC Championships ran right through Maine, capping off a dominant tour with thrashings of Colby, Bates and Bowdoin. The Panthers will look to continue their NESCAC hot streak during their matches against Tufts and Amherst. These will be the last home matches before the NESCAC Championships in February.

Listen to PFL weekly on Spotify



CAROLINE HARDING

MIDDLEBURY MEN'S BASKETBALL OFF TO A DOMINANT START OF THE SEASON

COURTESY OF WILL COSTELLO

Alex Sobel '23 shoots a basketball in Middlebury's Friday night win against Bowdoin.

By JACK McGUIRE
Senior Sports Editor

The Middlebury men's basketball team has dominated this season with an overall record of 14–2 and a record of 3–1 against NESCAC opponents.

The team has been ranked as high as eighth in the country, while owning the fourth best point differential in the NESCAC, thanks to a balanced playstyle. The team's biggest strengths comes from their success at rebounding and dominance near the basket. The Panthers lead the NESCAC in rebounds and blocked shots — a testament to the team's frontcourt skill.

A key driver of the team's success, especially in getting rebounds and blocking shots, has been forward Alex Sobel '23. Sobel has won multiple NESCAC Player of the Week awards this year and leads the NESCAC in major statistics, averaging 20.4 points per game, 11.9 rebounds per game and 4.4 blocks per game. This past weekend, Sobel reached an impressive milestone by scoring his 1000th career point with Middlebury in a game against Bowdoin. Sobel also breaks the archetype of a traditional forward in basketball with his dribbling abilities and success at distributing the ball to his teammates.

"Alex's game has improved over the years, and he's really the team's focal point," said Middlebury Head Coach Jeff Brown. "Offensively, we try to get him many touches because, along with leading the NESCAC in scoring, rebounding and blocked shots, he's leading our team in assists, so he's got such a balanced game."

Sobel is not the only driver behind the team's success. The Panthers boast a plethora of talented players on and off of the court. Forward David Brennan '24.5 has contributed to Middlebury's rebounding dominance, averaging 9.7 rebounds per game, second highest in the NESCAC. Sam Steven '25 and Noah Osher '23.5 have played extraordinarily well at the guard positions, with both averaging just under 13 points per game.

First years on the roster also contributed to the team's success. Evan Flaks '26, Jackson McKersie '26 and Edward Witherington '26 have all gotten minutes on the court and act as solid rotation players.

"We feel like we have quality depth because there's some other players coming in and off the bench and contributing also," Brown said.

Moving forward, the team is looking to become more consistent with their shooting and take advantage of the games they have left at Middlebury. The Panthers have not lost at home this year, but only seven of their 23 scheduled regular season games are at Pepin Gymnasium.

"We'd like to become more consistent on the offensive end and especially shooting a three point shot right," Brown said. "But, I think, part of the challenge with us has been we've had so few home games. In Pepin Gym, our guys are really comfortable because that's where we practice every day, and we shoot on those rims."

Even with a heavy away schedule, the basketball team remains optimistic and has lofty goals for the season.

"Our guys are very focused on the potential of playing in the postseason and trying to win some championships," said Brown.

The men's basketball team's next home game is Friday Jan. 27 at 7 p.m. in Pepin Gymnasium against Bates College.